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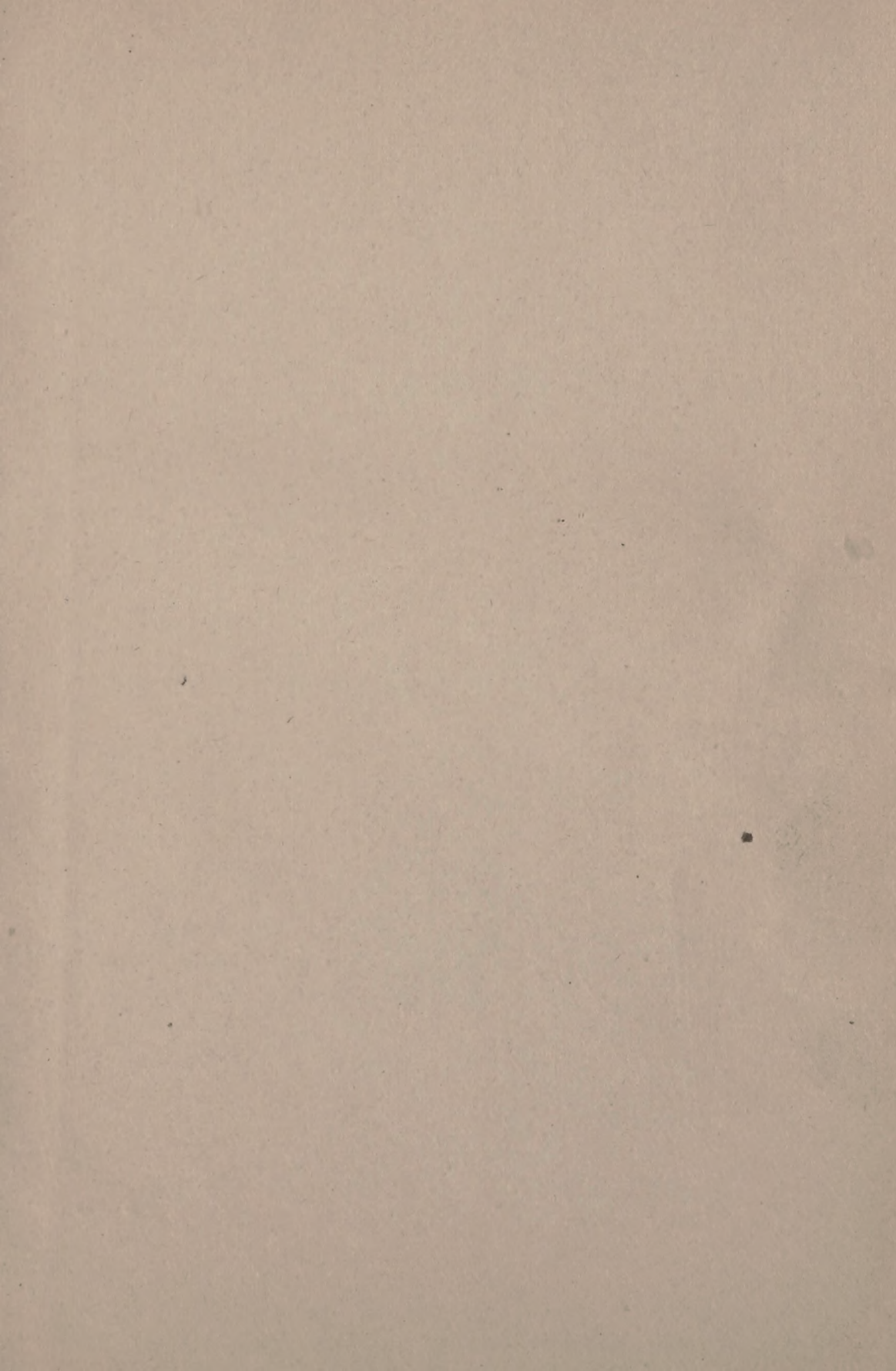
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PETER AND POLLY,

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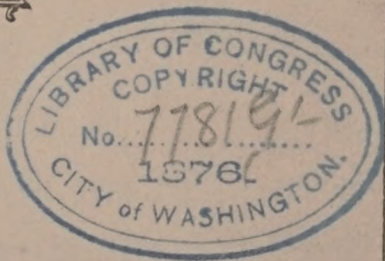
HOME-LIFE IN NEW ENGLAND

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

BY

MARIAN DOUGLAS.

*presented by
Mrs. Annie (Greene) Robinson
Marian Douglas*



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PETER AND POLLY.



CHAPTER I.

IT was the autumn of 1775, and the pale sunlight of the Indian summer gave a yellow tinge to the dry russet leaves yet clinging to the boughs of the giant oak that overshadowed the old Austin homestead, a substantial dwelling-house in a pleasant village in Massachusetts.

It was a hospitable, comfortable-seeming home, with two stories in front, and a "lean-to" roof, reaching groundward, in the rear, while a queer, bird-house-like porch sheltered the front door, that now swung open, letting the wind blow in the withered leaves. The sitting-

room within was, as well, a cheery, home-like place, where a tall clock, with elaborate brass ornaments, stood in one corner, and, loudly ticking, told the flight of time ; and where, in the fireplace, set round with gayly painted tiles, after the Dutch fashion, a fire of green ash was burning, that filled the air with the faint fragrance of its scented flames.

The room was strewn with articles of wearing-apparel for all seasons, while over the narrow winding stairs that led to the chambers above, ascending and descending like the angels of Jacob's ladder, little Peter and Polly Austin were constantly passing, busily making preparations for a long journey, and a lengthy stay with some unknown relatives in New Hampshire.

They were twins, and had just reached the sweet years of indiscretion, being now thirteen, — an age for them the more perilous, because, having lost their mother by death the year previous, they had now been compelled to part

with their father, a young physician, who, having received a commission in the new Colonial Army, had, three days before, ridden away to report himself at Cambridge, bidding them "good by" with tearful eyes, not knowing when he should return. He had not left, however, without making every arrangement he deemed possible for the care of his children during his absence, a subject which had caused him great anxiety. A worthy middle-aged couple, who had lately come to the place from Charlestown, where, in the stirring days of June, their house had been burned by British fire, and the man's right hand been partially disabled by a random shot, had already found shelter under his roof, and were grateful to accept the care of his land and buildings while he should be away. But, though excellent persons in their place, they were scarcely those to whom the watchful father cared to intrust the guidance of his thoughtful son and of his daring little Polly; and it was with a

sense of relief that he received an unexpected letter from his sister Nancy, who resided in a small but thrifty township in New Hampshire, saying that three men from her vicinity were shortly to be in his neighborhood on business, and "if, as a patriot should, he intended to enter the army, she trusted he would allow his children to be sent, in their company, to her home, where, until his return, she would watch over them with all of a Christian's faithfulness and all of a mother's love."

"Tut! tut! tut!" said Dr. Austin, on reading this epistle; "Nancy promises too much." Yet, notwithstanding, his heart, always sensitive to kindness, warmed, as he read, toward the almost stranger sister whom he had only seen for a few brief times since her marriage, when he was but a boy himself. He recalled, with brotherly pride, the many tributes to her beauty and grace to which he had listened, and remembering with pleasure that her husband, whom he had met but twice, had, on

those occasions, shown himself to have the manners of a gentleman, and that he was, moreover, spoken of by those that knew him better than himself as a person of character and position, as well as wealth, he gratefully concluded at once to accept the invitation, not even thinking, after the manner of parents of to-day, of consulting beforehand the wishes and opinions of two human fledglings of thirteen.

The three men foretold had in due time appeared, and, all excitement at the thought of going with them next morning, a new sense of self-consequence half consoling them for their father's departure, Peter and Polly, this bright November afternoon, gathered together their trinkets and treasures, anxious to carry as many as possible away with them.

"But you must leave most of them behind," forewarned Mrs. Ellis, the housekeeper from Charlestown; "all your luggage, big and little, you must get into those two bags." And

she pointed to two long sacks, woven of coarse green and red yarn, with leather tops and bottoms, which stood partially filled upon the floor.

“Peter won’t need,” said Polly, “as much room for his things as I shall for mine. I must get in all my best clothes.” For Polly was, at this time, a practical negative answer to the prophet’s inquiry, “Can a maid forget her ornaments?” “There are my short gowns and my red stuffed petticoat, and my neckerchiefs, and my tuckers, and my best long gown, and—”

“And what now?” broke forth Peter, indignantly interrupting his sister’s inventory. “I suppose you think you can have the filling of both bags yourself; but there are my Cæsar and Virgil, and my Dictionary and Grammar, and my Introduction to the Making of Latin! Father said they must be carried, and if Aunt Nancy knows a minister, or any other fit man, I shall be sent to him to be taught.” For, if Polly was vain of her girlish

finery, Peter was equally so of his reputation as a scholar, for his quickness in regard to books had already made his friends foresee for him college honors, and the then thrice-coveted laurels of a "learned man"; while Polly, though a ready reader of anything akin to stories, of which, either written or told, she was passionately fond, was by no means inclined to hard study. She was not even yet quite perfect in the Catechism; her spelling was always original, and her "pothooks" were the most forlorn of their species, though much good paper and many goose-quills she had ruined in following the copies given her at the village "reading and writing school."

"But those Latin books, and the sum-book, and the Psalter and the Catechism, and the Bible with the letter in it that we must give Cousin Keziah Hapgood, if she is living near Aunt Nancy, are all the books we can take; so you may as well put those two 'World Displayeds' back on the shelf."

"Yes, indeed!" confirmed Mrs. Ellis, authoritatively; "there is no room for them in the bags; and, if there were, books are too costly things for you to be carrying round the country, and, ten to one, losing in the end. I've heard your father say he paid twenty-six pounds for that set of books, and that's a great price to give for something you can't eat, nor drink, nor wear. Put them up, Peter."

Peter obeyed promptly, like one who had learned to mind what he was told, and replaced the books, with a sigh, in the small mahogany "buffet," that contained what was then a valuable and expensive library. It was made up chiefly, after the fashion of the day, of those theological works and printed sermons which the children of the Puritans seemed to take such delight in perusing. Controversial statements regarding the "Order of the Churches," the "Rise of Antinomianism," and the "New Light Ministry," "Election Sermons," and, vastly different, "Sermons on

Election," mournful funeral discourses, and sentimental wedding ones, with a sweetness caught from Solomon's Song, all were there ; but it was to the lowest of the small shelves of the buffet that Peter's eyes turned with longing regret. There were gathered what he deemed his treasures ; a stout edition of Shakespeare, a well-worn "Pilgrim's Progress," and a less prized "Paradise Lost," which, after all, was not unvalued by the reflective lad, who had never owned a child's or a young person's book in his life, and who, shut in to them as he had been, for lack of other reading, had found in each of these volumes a voiceless friend, all the dearer because he realized that what was best in them lay just beyond his reach, and that to-morrow would give new meaning to what he had learned to-day. "Midsummer Night's Dream" was, to Polly and himself, the most charming of fairy tales ; "Macbeth," an unfailing source of delightful horrors as a ghost-story ; Milton's warlike an-

gels, well-matched foes who fought bravely ; and Bunyan's Pilgrim, as real an existence as the Pilgrim Fathers. But the "World Displayed," in twenty diminutive volumes, with brown covers, filled with pictures of scenes in foreign lands, was most precious of all. It was, as the title said, "a curious collection of travels" ; and Peter and Polly, who, in body, had scarcely been beyond their native town, had, in soul, with these old voyagers, been round and round the world, searching for Prester John, discovering the East Indies, setting up the cross of conquest on palmy isles, watching the glittering icebergs on the Arctic Sea, sitting in Hottentot huts, or roaming through gold-decked palaces.

To leave these books behind, was to Peter a sore trial ; and as he replaced on the shelf the two volumes he had especially chosen to take with him, even Polly's heart was softened by the sight of his disconsolate face.

"There is one comfort, Peter," she said ;

“there is no make-believe in our going to New Hampshire. We’ve always wanted to travel, and I can’t help wishing, if we could get out of it safely, that we might meet a squad of British soldiers, or some roaming Indians, or a cross bear and some cubs, or anything of that kind, so as to have some adventures on the road.”

“*You* want to see cross bears?” said Peter, contemptuously. “You, who are afraid of your shadow!”

“O, yes, I’m afraid at the time,” returned Polly, nothing daunted; “but dangers, when they are well over, are such charming things to talk about.”

Next to having fine clothes, to be the heroine of hair-breadth escapes, was, just then, the dearest object of Polly’s ambition. “As for filling the bags,” she resumed —

“About that,” said Mrs. Ellis, “there need be no disputing between you; I will attend to the packing myself; and, Polly, when you

are gone, I hope you will work on your sampler, and be sure and take your stitches even, so as not to have to do them over. There has been silk enough, now, picked out of it to make another good one, and it's a pity to waste materials in times like these."

Polly flushed ; her sampler was a sore subject. She had commenced it with the thought that it would prove a marvel of its kind, as indeed it had. It was a long square of yellow-brown canvas, surrounded, on three sides, with a wreath where fruit and flowers and birds were mingled ; while underneath, trees, buildings, and beasts, such as "never were by sea or shore," were wrought in many-colored silks ; but, alas ! Polly, not content with regular patterns, had ventured to draw upon her imagination for designs, with most unsatisfactory results. Even the central verse, the only thing in which she had not sought to be original, for, with slight variations, it was the standard one of the time for the purpose,

“Polly Austin is my name,
America my nation;
Massachusetts is my State,
And Christ is my Salvation,”

was as sorry a specimen of needlework as of poetry.

“It was,” thought Polly, “exceedingly cruel in Mrs. Ellis to allude to this sampler before Peter”; whose brotherly comments on her fancy-work were wont to be more frank than agreeable; so, starting up, “If we are going to the graveyard, we may as well go now,” she said.

The “graveyard” was a small, stone-walled enclosure, on one side of the “meeting,” as the meeting-house itself was often called, treeless, except a growth of wild cherry along its edges, and one young elm, that waved over what Polly styled “the black corner,” where the village negroes were buried. Many of the graves were unmarked; but what stones there were, were rich in epitaphs, from the long

Latin inscription over the minister's resting-place to the odd rhymes on the humbler headstones of the flock. Without staying to read them again, Polly knew every verse there. She had spelled them out Sunday noons in summer, when, between morning and afternoon services, she had rambled among the graves, and fed the brown sparrows with the crumbs of her luncheon.

“A Pious Soul, on wings of Love,
And Feathers of an Holy Dove,
He bid this weary world Adieu
And wisely up to Heaven flew.”

“She was kind to all, She seemed contented,
She lived beloved and Died lamented.”

“Reader

Behold as you pass by
as You are now Soe,
Once was I as I am
Now Soe You Must be
Prepare for Death
and Follow me.”

It had never occurred to Polly that there

was anything in stanzas like these to awaken a smile. The graveyard was, to her, a very awful place, that still had a certain fascination that made her like to visit it, with her little schoolmates or with Peter; but nothing could have persuaded her to enter there alone.

The ground all around the place was completely covered by a close network of running blackberry-vines, still beautiful, and in many places green, after the sharp October frosts, but catching and clinging unmercifully as the children passed through them to the farther end, where their mother slept peacefully by two little Timothies and a small Miranda, infant children, whose resting-place was marked by three small black stones, adorned by curiously carved and exceedingly ill-visaged cherubs. Polly stooped down and laid her hand, as if for "farewell," tenderly upon her mother's grave, while Peter stood by in true awkward boy-fashion, feeling that a last visit to such a place was a time when it would be

proper to do or say something, and not knowing what.

“Polly!” he said at last, taking out of his breeches-pocket a carefully folded square of paper, “I think here would be a good place to read this over again.”

He found, near by, a little space of grass free from the thorny vines, and the two children sat down, their arms around each other, to read together their father’s farewell letter.

MY DEAR CHILDREN: As, by the Providence of God and the Need of my Country, I am Now called to Part with You for a Season, I leave behind a few Words of Counsel, that, when I am Away, may serve to remind You Both of your Father and your Duty. You are now going to Reside for the Present in what is to you a Strange Place, and where I have No Friends to whose Care I can Commend you, save my Sister and Her Husband, unless it may Prove so that Miss Keziah Hapgood, that Excellent Cousin of your Mother, and Doubly Dear for Her Sake, may still be

living somewhere in the neighborhood of your Aunt.

As you will, therefore, be thrown among Strangers, I Hope that your Conduct will be Discreet even beyond Your Years. Let Your Behaviour to your Elders be marked by Docility, Reverence, and Obedience to Instruction. In company, Avoid alike a Pert and Forward Demeanor and a Sul-
len, Silent one. Be Emulous without Envy, Kind without Servility, and by Patience, Forbearance, and Truthfulness, merit the Reward of an approving Conscience, however the World may Regard you.

As Concerns the Cultivation and Improvement of your Minds, I have written to your Uncle to Procure, for Peter, a Master in Latin and Greek, that He may be properly fitted for College, and to give Polly as good Schooling as lies in his Power to Bestow ; but, as I fear that, at Present, you will have few Opportunities for Reading, therefore I trust you will the more Carefully peruse whatever Good Books you may be able to Obtain and think over Attentively what You have Read,

so if not Able to Learn all I could wish, You will be constantly Adding something to your Store of Knowledge.

Finally, never Forget your Mother's Counsels, nor Cease to give Good Attention to Reading the Bible and to Prayer, for, without God's Blessing, we can never be Happy in this World or Reign in the Next.

Whether it may be the Design of an All-Wise Providence to Return me to You again, or whether, for the Last Time, I have Looked upon You, May you ever Remember me with True Affection, Knowing my Highest Wish is for your Prosperity, and my constant Prayer that you may be Useful on Earth and Blessed in Eternitie.

Your loving Father,

PETER AUSTIN.

Polly took out her blue-bordered handkerchief and wiped her eyes; she was not ashamed to have even Peter see her tears, they seemed so poor a tribute of her sorrow for her father's absence. "If she could only

see him," she thought, "and tell him how much she loved him, and how good and faithful she meant to be."

She rose, and as she did so Peter laid his hand gently upon her arm. "There is one thing, Polly!" he said, "that I have been thinking about, and that is, you and I have got to be all the family of us there is, now, and if you will stick by me, I will stick by you; won't you, Polly?"

"Stick by you?" said Polly; "yes, Peter, through thick and thin, whatever comes!—but, don't you think we should be happier if we did n't tease each other quite so much; if I should give up calling you 'Book-worm,' and you should have a little less to say about my clothes?"

"Yes," said Peter, "we should: I don't like teasing any better than you do; but, about your clothes, you *are* too riggish, Polly."

"Well, if I'm riggish, you're priggish," retorted Polly. "If I were a boy, I would n't

sit down with my cue half braided, and my nose in an old Latin book, as you will."

Just then a magnificent golden flicker, lingering when his mates were flown, lighted on one of the cherry-trees near, and watching the gleam of his wings the children forgot the dispute fast arising out of their resolutions to be peaceful and considerate.





CHAPTER II.

UP in the morning, fluttering and twittering like a swallow making ready for flight, was Polly, before the cocks had begun to crow or the stars grow dim by the pale light of the pretty green candle colored with bayberry-wax, making herself fine before the little looking-glass, quite as anxious as to her appearance as would become a bride on her wedding morning ; for “to-day,” thought Polly, “my path will take a new turn.”

Good or ill, dark or bright, an untried existence lay before her. Far away in more newly settled New Hampshire, who knew what strange adventures might befall her? Her head was full of Indian stories, which made

up half of the old women's talk in those days, and all she knew of the locality to which she was going was, that it was a township not far from the place where, some seventy-eight years before, the lion-hearted Mrs. Dustin had fled from her tormentors, with a string of Indian scalps. That was long, long before, and tomahawks were not to Polly's taste; but she had also listened breathless to the story of the fair Mrs. Howe, the "beautiful captive" who, only twenty years before, had been carried from Hinsdale, New Hampshire, and sold to the French in Canada; and of a little Rachel Meloon, who had been borne away from Salisbury, and, after dwelling nine years with the savages in their wigwams, had been brought back to her friends, an Indian at heart, singing their songs and speaking their tongue, and sorrowing, wherever she went, for her dusky friends of the forest. Reckless Polly, looking in the mirror at the earnest, glowing little face it showed,

felt, as she had said, that "if she and Peter only came safely through, she was quite ready for anything"; the more excitement the better; for she had quite as wild a love for adventure as if she had been brought up on dime novels instead of the "Assembly's Catechism."

"If anything should happen," thought Polly, "it is a good thing to be looking your best; then if people get into trouble they have something to help themselves out."

She stooped just then to buckle her shoe. Certainly, her feet were something to be proud of, so slender and shapely, with such finely turned ankles, such daintily arched insteps; "it was quite a pleasure to look at them," Polly thought; and, if any one knew, she ought, for she had often taken pleasure in mounting a high chair for the sake of a peep at them, in the little bedroom mirror. But this morning she was less satisfied with their looks than she was wont, for the stockings

which Mrs. Ellis had laid by for her to put on were of gray woollen yarn, not the finest, and now that they were on, she saw that the legs were too large, and "bagged" about the ankles. This was an affliction indeed. Polly caught just that instant a glimpse of a little pair of white silk stockings with lovely clocks, which lay in the unclosed top of one of the bags. She looked at them with longing eyes. "The soul that hesitates is lost." "There is plenty of time, and no harm in just trying them on," she thought; and drawing them up very straightly with her garters close tied, they looked even prettier than she had expected when she pulled off the others; so much so, that she could not help rolling up the gray woollen ones in a ball, and stuffing them as far as she could beneath the other contents of the bag. When she had done this, had it not been for a certain restless pricking of her conscience, she would have felt quite satisfied, the rest of the clothes provided for her to ride

in being, in truth, quite too good for the occasion; for Mrs. Ellis, who, since her coming to the house, had taken charge of her wardrobe, had shared fully in her love of dress,—perhaps, indeed, was the chief cause of it by her injudicious conversation. She, in her maiden days, had been a seamstress in great Boston, and all her talk now was of the men and women of fashion she had seen in the fine houses there: bewitching gallants dressed, for great dinners, in peach-blossom velvet trimmed with silver-lace; matrons with plumed heads, like crested cockatoos; and fair young maidens, in “raiment of wrought needlework,” with love-locks on their foreheads and roses on their breasts.

Dr. Austin was free-hearted and indulgent, and Mrs. Ellis, in assuming the care of Polly’s outfit, had made it, for “a growing girl,” almost an extravagant one. The gown the little girl was to wear to-day was of imported worsted damask, re-dyed black for Polly to

wear as mourning for her mother; but her cloak, which had been made with a thought of long-continued future use, was of scarlet broadcloth trimmed with sable fur, and her best gown, also of worsted damask, was blue and white, and flowered with red.

“Very fine indeed,” Polly thought, and calculated to make an impression on all beholders. Even her ambition, in regard to her prospective appearance, was satisfied as to her clothes. Polly’s careless spirits, however, all vanished, when, just as her toilet was completed, she clasped around her throat the little mourning-necklace which her father had given her, according to the custom of the time, at her mother’s funeral. The memento, thoughtlessly worn till then, now that she was to leave all the scenes with which she was familiar, brought back to her thought so many tender memories, that the quick tears sprang at once to her blue eyes. She was fairly sobbing when Mrs. Ellis opened the door. “What! home-

sick before you start? That will never do!" she said; "keep up your spirits; you have a long journey before you, and, if you get hungry, you can eat, as you ride, one of the honey-cakes I shall put in your pocket."

The three men who were to bear the twins away rode up to the door in good season, mounted and ready to depart. Before they came, Polly had tried to give her thoughts of them a romantic coloring; but Peter had said, "They must be three cowardly loons, else they would not have come all the way from New Hampshire with no thought of joining the army."

When she came to start, Polly found, to her dismay, that Peter was to "sit double" with the youngest and handsomest rider, and the owner of the best horse, and was to keep in advance of the rest of the party; the next most attractive stranger, as far as she could discern, in the gray light, for it was scarcely morning when they came, was to ride with the

saddle-bags ; while she, of course, fell to the last of the three, and was to sit on a pillion behind him.

It was not a pretty pillion. Almost dark as it was, Polly could see the feathers, with which it was stuffed, looking out through its worn covering. It was an old bony horse, and the rider was worst of all. Polly's vain little heart failed her as Mr. Ellis lifted her to the seat behind him. "Good by ! and don't let Peter spoil his satin breeches," called Mrs. Ellis ; and that was her last farewell.

Polly waved one hand, while with the other she clung to the man in front, and the tears ran down her cheeks. The growing day, that showed her companion more plainly, did not, alas ! lend him attractions, — a man of fifty, wrinkled, cross-eyed, and ill shaven ; his hair combed back and braided in a cue, tied round with a piece of eel-skin and plentifully powdered, which was his only attention to dress as a fine art ; his coat, of poorly woven home-

spun, badly cut and worse made; his breeches and long waistcoat of buckskin, old and blackened in places; his cocked hat, which had seen hard service, much the worse for wear; while, sure signs of a sloven, there were marks of candle-drippings on his sleeve, sprinklings of hair-powder on his shoulders, and scatterings of snuff on the dingy ruffle of his shirt.

Polly, who was not accustomed to "judging righteous judgment," but to rating people by outside show, was more and more prejudiced against him as they jogged along; for in addition to his untidy looks, he paid no more attention to her than if she had been a sack of meal laid on behind him.

Why should he? One little girl was not of much account to him. He was the father of fourteen children, and, though the eldest of them were now grown, by a second marriage to a widow with five he had made his house so full of little folks, that, when he had a chance to be quiet, he was glad enough to

embrace it. In truth, his heart to-day was too heavy to say much. Mr. Burbean, for that was his name, was not of the stuff that patriots are made of, and the call of Freedom woke in him no very ardent response. But he was an honest, well-meaning man, and a kind father and husband, and he knew what war was better than Polly did. By and by he began to mutter to himself, quite unconscious of a listener. "There's a hard time coming, there's a hard time coming," he repeated. "Breadstuffs will be high, and cattle will be scarce, and the border Injuns will be all hawkin' round, and the paper-money — Little girl!" he said, suddenly remembering her, and turning round so quickly that Polly was nearly startled off her seat, — "little girl! do you know how long your father thinks this war is going to last?"

"No, sir, I do not," replied Polly, respectfully; "but I heard him say, last summer, General Washington thought it would be over

pretty soon, and he should eat his Christmas dinner at home in Virginia."

"Christmas?" said Mr. Burbean, "that comes in December, don't it? We don't make any account of it in our region. It's a kind of a Popish day, anyhow."

"I guess father don't expect there will be any peace at present. He said he thought he might be gone a long time," said Polly, almost with a sob at the thought.

"I guess ~~he~~ don't! I see your father once, and he looked like a man of sense," responded Mr. Burbean.

"He *is* a man of sense," confirmed Polly, her heart warming for the first time towards her companion. Then they rode on again in silence. The road was rough, for there had been a great rain the month before, a wild storm, when in the White Mountains a new river had broken forth, and the channel of the Saco had been divided in its midst. Here and there the road was badly gullied,

and, as the old horse was given to stumbling, Polly, on her pillion, had a constant thought as to what might become of her. On, on they went, now coming to some small village, where every man they saw had some question to ask, as to "how things looked where they had been," and "what was the news from the army." To all inquiries Mr. Burbean replied, in the same words he had muttered to himself, "There's a hard time coming. Breadstuffs will be high, and cattle will be scarce, and the border Injuns will be hawkin' round, and the paper-money won't be worth a crop of fire-weed. As for the army, some said it was a little easier now, but they'd been short for food and clothing and rum; some of the soldiers' time was up, and a good many of 'em were gitting discouraged."

"Well, well," was the cheering answer of more than one individual, "there are better times coming. Benedict Arnold is up in the North, and when he is in motion we are sure

of good news." "He ought," said one young man, whom they found sitting on a rock by the way, and polishing an old Queen Anne musket, "to have been in Washington's place. He's the man for the day."

"Well, no," said Mr. Burbean, shaking his head; "he's a brave man, Arnold is, but he ain't a prudent one. In the dark one needs prudence, and there's a hard time coming, — a hard time coming."

This dreary prophecy, often repeated, weighed down poor Polly's heart; it seemed in unison with the gloomy November wind that wailed through the naked trees with the voice of coming winter; but, as she rode on, all other feelings were soon lost in a sense of physical discomfort. Her shoulders were well protected by her red cloak, but, in order to shield it from being spattered with mud, Mrs. Ellis had pinned it up all around, and covered it with a brown, home-made shawl. The air was sharp and keen, and her limbs,

covered with the thin silk stockings, grew colder and colder, till a chill ran over her, and she shivered so she could scarcely cling to her companion, though, on that stumbling horse, she dared not loosen her hold upon him for an instant. When she had left her home, she felt glad that, in the dim morning light, Mrs. Ellis had not noticed how her feet were dressed; now, she was half sorry that her folly had not been discovered, and she compelled to wear something warmer. On, on they went. "No haste, no rest," was Mr. Burbean's motto as well as Goethe's. Peter and his companion, on a dashing steed, quite a marvel in those days, when, often ill-broken and commonly overworked, the farmers' horses were a sorry set, were far in advance of them. Seth Brown, with the saddle-bags, though better mounted than they, was generally some distance in the rear, owing to his disposition to stop at nearly every farm-house for a little talk and a drink of cider. Slowly

forward the old white horse plodded on: now up some rocky hillside, shaded with white-oak from which the autumn wind had not yet stripped the dry and withered leaves; now through a "valley of dry bones," where some makeshift settler had sought to make a forest-clearing by girdling the trees, and where, dead and decaying, the tall trunks were falling down against each other, and the ground was strewn with dry and broken branches; and now through the solemn temples of the tall pines, where, "no feller having come up against them," the great trees rose from a hundred and fifty to two hundred feet, upon either side the road, and where, far above, the low murmur of their boughs seemed to Polly like a voice from a world unknown. The king's mark, "G. R.," was cut deeply in the bark of the tallest and finest of them. They were not common trees in the region where she had lived, but Polly had heard of them often, "his Majesty's pines," that were the property of

the crown, and which no one could cut, even if owning the land on which they grew, without incurring a heavy fine. Here and there the road took a strange turn, which had probably been given it by the men who laid it out, years before, so as to take advantage of the beaver-dams, which were safe and convenient crossings of the running streams, thus saving, at first, the expense of making bridges. Now, the way lay beside a small pond, and the freezing wind, blowing across the water, beat against poor Polly pitilessly. But at last they came out into a clear place, and were climbing a steep hillside, when Mr. Burbean, looking up at the sky, vouchsafed another remark. "Little girl," he said, "you're used to a clock, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir, I am," replied Polly.

"Well, I ain't," he returned; "I don't know anything about luxuries, but I can tell when noon comes as well as anybody. It's 'most here now, and at the next house I'll stop and get dinner."

“And warm ourselves,” Polly added, her teeth chattering, and her feet and limbs benumbed in her silk stockings.

The next house proved to be a comfortable log-dwelling, surrounded with fields, several of them black from being burnt over, the May before, to rid them of the troublesome trees. A herd of swine were scampering in and out of an enclosed piece of oak wood, on one side of the road, and a shock-headed child was amusing himself by shouting to them and pelting them with sticks. Inside of the house there was a good-sized room, lighted by two diminutive windows, with four small panes of glass in each, while a square opening overhead led, by means of a ladder, to a dark loft above. A young woman with two children clinging to her was cutting pumpkin in strips to dry; and a brisk old dame, her gray hair drawn straight back without a cap, dressed in coarse butternut-colored cloth, with a pair of rough home-made moccasins on her feet, met

the travellers at the door, as they rode up, saying "her men-folks were away, making cider, but she would give them for dinner as good as she had herself, and that was baked pumpkin and milk."

Mr. Burbean ate his from the shell, but Polly's was served up to her in a wooden bowl. It was good enough, but she was too cold to eat. She drew a small stool to the fireplace and crouched down as near to the blaze as possible. The children and young woman stared at her, full of curiosity; while the old grandmother surveyed her with that look of contempt with which the hard-working, hard-faring new settlers were wont to regard anything that seemed like an approach to the effeminacy of fashionable life.

"You cold?" she asked, at length, indifferently.

"Yes, madam, my feet are," said Polly, for they really ached.

"I should think so," said the old woman;

“those silk stockings look more nice than wise.”

The rough truth of the speech cut Polly to the quick. The tears came, and in a minute more she was sobbing. Mr. Burbean, with his mouth full of pumpkin, heard the sound, and felt called on to explain.

“Her mother’s died, and her father’s gone into the army; that’s what’s the matter of her,” he said.

“Gone into the army?” asked the woman, her wrinkled face losing its hardness in an instant. “Well, I would n’t cry any more, if I was you,” she said, turning to Polly; “it won’t do him any good, and I’ll get you some old stockings to draw on your legs, and keep ’em warm. — And what’s the news from the war?” she asked Mr. Burbean.

“Dark,” was the reply. “There’s a hard time coming. Breadstuffs will be high, and —”

“Hard times! and what’s that to scare me?” asked the old woman, her eye flashing,

and the color coming into her face ; “ have I lived so easy that I should be frightened by ’em ? Hard times ! My father and mother fit with the Injuns before I was born, and I myself, when I was four years old, see my Uncle John lying dead with his scalp off ; and me and my husband, hain’t we warred for everything we’ve had ? We’ve fit for our sheep with the wolves, and our pigs with the bears, and our geese with the foxes, and our chickens with the skunks, and we’ve cut the trees, and burnt the brush, and dug, and hoed, and fit with the land for all the crops we’ve raised. If you want anything, you’ve got to strike for it, and I ain’t the kind that wants to lie down, and have them Britishers step on us, as if we were caterpillars. I hain’t forgotten about them Connecticut River grants. There’s been some queer works here in New Hampshire. Hard times ! I’m *willing* to have ’em, if some of them old wigs in Porchmouth only can be brought down where they belong ! ”

“ Well, we ’ll hope all will prove for the best,” said Mr. Burbean, fidgeting round on his leather-bottomed chair. He had the interests of his fourteen children, to say nothing of his second wife’s little brood, to think about, and the vision of outside troubles was, to him, doubly perplexing.

The old woman, having expressed her mind, now climbed up the ladder into the loft, and came down with a pair of long stockings dyed yellow with onion-skins. The feet were nearly worn out, and the legs were full of holes, but, “ if keeping warm is what you want, they will answer for you,” she said to Polly.

Polly had been too nearly frozen to be vain, and, humbly thanking the giver, she meekly drew them on, putting them over shoes, buckles, and all, as, between their large size and the holes in them, it was easy to do.

The hostess would take no pay for their dinner from Mr. Burbean ; but Polly wished to seem grateful, and presented the children with

all the cakes that Mrs. Ellis had stowed away in the pretty patchwork pocket tied on under her gown, to say nothing of a yard of red shoe-binding she gave to the young woman.

The afternoon ride was much like the morning's, through pine woods and oak, past meadows and clearings, over shaky bridges, up steep hills, into lonesome valleys; almost the same, only Polly was vastly more comfortable, or would have been, had she not found that, since through excitement she had almost forgotten to eat her breakfast before starting, and since at noon she had felt too chilled and sad to touch her baked pumpkin, and since her honey-cakes were given away, she was quite without food and exceedingly hungry. "O, so hungry!" she thought, and remembered numerous half-starved voyagers she had read about in the "World Displayed." The old horse was coming down a long hill, when Mr. Burbean stopped and pointed to a house a little way beyond.

“There’s the Winsley Tavern ; we shall stop there to-night,” he said. Just then they heard a sound behind, and Seth Brown with the saddle-bags rode past. “I’ll be at Winsley’s first,” he called, and waved his hat.

It was a cheery-looking place to Polly, in the rosy light of the November sunset, now burning in the west. “Here, at last,” she thought, “I shall find both fire and supper.” It was a large house built against the side of a hill, so that the barn, stables, and cart-houses were all on a level with its chambers, the bar-room being on the second story, yet having a ground-entrance. A tall staff, on one side, swung aloft the sign-board, which bore upon it a new device, “The Liberty Tree,” painted in brightest green. It was a busy time of year, and even Polly, with her inexperienced eyes, saw at once the house must be full of company. Well-dressed and ill-dressed, in broadcloth and homespun, buckskin breeches and rawhide leggins, all were there, and, waiting her arrival,

close by the immense horse-block, was Peter, his face aglow with delight.

“O Polly!” he asked, as he helped her to alight, “did you ever have so good a ride?” But just then looking down, “What’s this?” he asked; “you, you, of all girls, Polly Austin! how came you to have those horrid yellow rags on your feet? Come in, come into the house, as quickly as you can, and don’t let anybody see you!”

Poor Polly, completely humiliated, slunk after him, and he led the way down through a side door, where he thought they would be unobserved; for Peter had reached the house some time before, and, boy like, already felt acquainted there.

Polly, the first instant she could, twitched off the yellow stockings and revealed the offending silk ones beneath.

“Well, Polly, if you are not a fool, there never was one!” was Peter’s plain-spoken remark on seeing them.

"But that's a monstrous wicked speech to make, if I was," retorted Polly, sharply, never slow in her own defence.

But O, the supper they had, when supper came! broiled pigeons and cream toast! What delicious fare it seemed to poor half-starved Polly! while Peter, sitting by, stopped eating every now and then, to tell about his ride, which had been as gay as his sister's had been dull; for the person that he rode with, instead of "a cowardly loon," had proved to be a "most wonderful, companionable man," entertaining him with wild tales of the French War, and of Indian hunters, that had been "as good as a book," he said.

"That is the best praise *you* can give," said Polly; "but there are things in the world *I* like better than books; lovely genteel people to talk with, and beautiful things to see, and merry times and romantic adventures, all of one's own!" And Polly sighed, and helped herself to pigeon for the third time.



CHAPTER III.

IT was gratifying to the young people, next morning, to find that they were to stay over the day at the tavern. Peter's companion had business in the neighborhood. Mr. Burbean, well paid beforehand for his charge, saw that Polly, though used to horseback riding, from jogging round with her father, on his visits to his patients, was not strong enough for journeying two days in succession ; and Seth Brown, stirring up great mugs of flip in the bar-room, was only too glad to make an excuse for stopping, by saying, he thought it best the saddle-bags should not go on before their owners.

Peter and Polly had such fresh young eyes,

so eager to see, and finding so much of interest in everything they saw, that it is possible they looked about the premises quite as much as was proper ; for, except the chambers, there was scarcely a room into which they did not peer. Peter led the way, and Polly, who felt a cold coming on, and whose limbs were stiff, but whose spirit was as willing as her flesh was weak, hobbled after, wherever he went. They put their heads into the great kitchen, where, out of the big chimney oven so large that a child of ten could have gone into it, a red-faced cook was taking huge iron pots of smoking baked beans ; into the parlor, with its sanded floor, its fine looking-glass, and its bright, glowing fireplace, holding wood six feet long, to which Polly was always coming back, and fluttering about like a moth around a candle, warming her chilly, silken-dressed feet ; into the little room where a barber was dressing over a short white wig, with curling-irons, and a half-dozen men sat

by, each wishing to be the first to have his cue re-braided and his face clean shaved, for the barber was a busy man in those beardless days; into the entry of the bar-room, filled with the odor of tobacco-smoke and toddy, and of the loud sound of oaths from some men quarrelling over a game of cards, the first real profanity that Polly, brought up in a Puritan town, where the laws against it had not yet spent their force, had ever heard. As for the bar-room itself, where there was the usual display of jugs and mugs and tankards and runlets and flowing bowls, in spite of the recent great rise in the cost of spirits, only Peter had a glimpse of it; for, as he said, "it was no place for a girl to look into."

"Nor for you, either, where they take the name of God in vain," said Polly, solemnly shaking her head.

But when Peter, anxious to extend his observations further, went out into the wide stable-yard, Polly put on her shawl and

daringly followed after. There stood a half-dozen great carts, from which the oxen had been taken to rest and be fed. Two or three of them were filled with new spinning-wheels, held firmly in their places by bags of wool, perhaps the property of some enterprising manufacturer. A sunburnt hostler, lazy and slow-motioned, and ready to have a word with any one, was unloading a clumsy vehicle in one corner.

“If you will look under that shed you’ll find something mebbe you hain’t seen before!” he called to Peter, as he came by. “It’s a chaise; once in a while one stops here, but not often; a cart with two tongues, my little brother Peleg calls it, and a good many folks round here never see one.”

“Never saw one!” said Polly, with a slightly contemptuous accent. “Chaises are very common things where I came from; I have often ridden in them myself.” And with a glance in the direction indicated, but without

stopping to examine the wonder, she drew her shawl closer, and, leaving Peter behind, hurried into the house, glad to get in from the bleak outdoor air, and to warm her feet by the fireplace.

Sitting on a long settle on the side of the room were two men ; the one, a ruddy, blue-eyed fellow, in a teamster's striped frock and long leggins and coarsely made shoes, without buckles, who sat playing with an ox-goad and talking with the other, an older man, with a droll little white wig, and a complete suit of coarse brown homespun.

"Very common people in very common clothes," was Polly's comment. She wished the great magnates who had come in the chaise — a handsome man in fine broadcloth, and his wife in a silk dress, with muffled sleeves fastened by glittering buttons — would only stay where she could take notice of them. But as there was nothing else to do, Polly listened to what the two men were saying.

“List!” said the younger man; “I *hain’t*; but if the war holds out I *shall*; and when I go into the army I sha’ n’t come back till it’s over. There were some young blades I knew, all in a hurry to be off as soon as they heard of Lexington; and now that the rations are cut down, and they find that soldiering is hard work and poor pay, they are grumbling to get home again. ‘Fighting and fising are two things,’ as John Millin used to say.”

“Ah, what’s become of John?” asked the elder. “I remember seeing him when he first came up from Portsmouth, just married, dressed in scarlet and gold-lace, and his wife as pretty as a picture, with eyes like two stars.”

“They were dull enough before she died,” said the younger man, — “faded with tears; John and she are both gone, and their last days were full of trouble that all came from getting in debt.”

“Ah, that’s bad! How so?” asked the other. “His father was a rich man, — ships going and coming, a troop of black servants, and a table covered with silver.”

“John had too much money when he was young, and was too venturesome in using it,” said the first speaker. “As soon as he was heir to the property, he married and came up to this part of the country to lay out new townships. He had an idea that money would grow on new lands as pigeon-plants spring up on a clearing. But Pine Abel, — you know who he is, — ’t was a name he got when he had a mast contract, and made a good thing for himself looking after the king’s woods, — he was too sharp for John. He joined with him in buying and selling lands, but it somehow happened, whatever way things went, the gains were always Abel’s and the losses John’s. By and by a ship went down, on its way to England, that John Millin partly owned, as well as half its cargo of timber

and spars; and then he got into a lawsuit about some Connecticut River grants he was concerned about; and, first one thing and then another, his property all seemed to go like dew before the sun. He was in debt, and his land went here and his money there to pay his creditors. Old Justice Cram took his house and part of the furniture, but Pine Abel was the hardest of all. He took his cattle and his clothes and his bedding, his watch and his knee-buckles, and his wife's gold beads; and as things grew worse and worse, and John grew poorer and poorer, he kept sending the sheriff till there was nothing left to lay hands on. He took their andirons out of the fireplace, and the brass kettle, and their last knife and fork; and, when there was n't anything else, a bag of wheat that John had planted and raised, and thrashed himself, and expected to have to live on. That broke John down; he had n't been used to hard times when he was a boy,

and when that happened he gave up, sick, and was as crazy as a loon. His wife borrowed a bed of my sister Betty for him to lie on, and I went and sat up with him three nights running; and the fourth morning I went down to the house, — a miserable place it was too, made of half-fitting logs with one small isinglass window; the doors were open, and I went in and looked everywhere, but there was n't any one to be seen. The sheets were turned down from the bed where John had been, but he was gone. I went out and searched through the fields near by, and up in the pasture I looked about and called, 'Rob! Rob!' — that was the name of John's little boy about ten years old, — but nobody answered. At last, down in a bushy place, the first I knew I came upon Rob, sitting half hid by the tall weeds. He was white as a sheet, and his eyes were fierce and shining as a wild-cat's. 'Touch him if you durst!' he said; and then he saw

who it was, and he came to me and began to cry, and he called his mother, — she was hid close by, — and she told me all about it. All through the night before John was out of his head, and kept saying he was dying, and that Abel would come and take his body for debt; and when the breath did leave him she knew Abel *could* do that and she was afraid he might, so she and Jock Adams — he was a fellow near, not very quick-witted, but kinder than many folks that are — took the corpse and carried it out into the pasture and hid it under some elder-bushes. There he lay, the great white flowers — 't was July — nodding and waving like white feathers over him.

“ ‘Don't fret yourself, Mrs. Millin,’ said I; ‘Abel's heart is hard enough for anything, but attaching a corpse is ghostly work, and he knows how folks look at it too well to try it. I'll make a coffin, and you go right ahead with the funeral.’ So I nailed up a coffin and put

him in it, and we got bearers, and the minister made a prayer; but I felt easier myself when the ground was over him. And you ought to have seen that boy, Rob, at the funeral: he just sat by the coffin and watched for the sheriff, his great eyes like burning coals. It almost scared me."

"But what became of John's wife?"

"O, she's gone too. She was a sickly creature, and after her husband died, she failed fast, though she lived nearly three years. As for Rob, just before she died she 'prenticed him to a man named Dow, a shoemaker. I think her mind was broken when she did it. Dow's sister, a crafty-tongued woman, tended her in her sickness, and doubtless influenced her when her mind was wandering. It is, I fear, a hard place for the poor boy."

Polly's romance-loving heart thrilled with indignant pity as she listened to this tragic tale. Her sympathies went out toward this unknown, much-suffering "Rob." She wished

she could see him and tell him how sorry she was for all his trials. "But that will never be!" she said, as she retold the story to Peter, when, half an hour after, he came in.





CHAPTER IV.

POLLY'S heart beat very fast, when, on the last day of their journey, the old horse began to quicken his pace, and Mr. Burbean pointed to a black weather-beaten building, on two sides of which an old barricade was standing, built of hewn logs to the height of the roof, with a sentry-box still perched in the corner. "Little girl," he said, "that's the old garrison; we are getting to the village, and you will know your uncle's, for it's next to the meeting, and the largest house in the place."

Polly sat up very straight, and tried to look her best as she rode up the street, the village dogs barking, and the ever-present hogs grunt-

ing, and scampering, this way and that, before them.

It was really a pleasant place, for, though most of the dwellings were small and unpainted, they were tidily kept, and most of them recently built, giving a new, fresh look to the village, to which she had not been accustomed in her Massachusetts home.

The meeting-house was a substantial-looking building, with a square porch at one end, surmounted by a belfry yet waiting for a bell; and next it, separated by the graveyard, and with a thrifty orchard of immense pear and apple trees beyond it, — for there were “giants in those days” in the fruit-grower’s world, — stood her Uncle Philbrick’s home, a large, handsome house, painted of a light yellow color, and with a multiplicity of windows which even inexperienced Polly realized must have cost a pretty penny, considering the price of glass.

“How lovely and genteel it is!” she thought,

as she dismounted at the horse-block, beside which Peter, already arrived, was waiting as he had done at the inn. "No vulgar block," she noticed, with her grandeur-loving eyes, like the pine stumps which served that purpose by so many houses, but a fine round of well-cut stone.

"And how lovely and genteel she is!" she thought again, when the door opened and her aunt came out to meet her; a handsome woman of nearly fifty, with keen black eyes, trim figure, and wonderful pink and white complexion, whose fairness was enhanced by a small black patch on her left cheek. Her dress was of homespun, but of the nicest quality, her cap-border was trimmed with fine lace, and her flowered silk neckerchief, where it crossed her bosom, was fastened with a pin of brilliant stones set in silver.

Polly returned her kiss with warmth. She was quite sure she should like her, only she wished her black eyes were not quite so sharp;

they seemed to see at a glance everything about her. And Polly wished the pins were out of her cloak, that it might display its beauty, so as to make a favorable impression upon her aunt.

“Have the saddle-bags come?” she asked Peter. He nodded in answer, but Polly noticed that he had his most sober face.

“Won’t you come in and have a drink of cider?” said Mrs. Philbrick to Mr. Burbean, who, having helped his charge to alight, was drawing up the bridle to move on.

“No, madam, I thank you,” he answered, deferentially. “I’ve had to come on slowly, so as not to tire the little girl; and as I left four of the children ailing, I want to get home.”

“But I would like to ask you,” said Mrs. Philbrick, stepping up by his horse’s side, “what people are saying, and how things look where you have been?”

“Well, I think things look dark,” he an-

swered ; “ here we are, a weakly young country, at war with a strong old one. It’s like a small cub fighting with a grown bear. As far as I can see, there’s a hard time coming. Breadstuffs will be high, and cattle will be scarce, and the paper-money — ”

“ What do people say about that ? ” interrupted Mrs. Philbrick, anxiously.

“ Well, some have hopes of it, and some hain’t,” was the reply ; “ but for my part, I think it will be sure to bring trouble.”

“ It’s a ruinous, mischievous thing, having it,” said Mrs. Philbrick ; “ I don’t know where ’t will end. My husband says — ” She hesitated, stopped, and began again, “ But we ought to be willing to make sacrifices for our country, and I’m sure *we* do. We wear homespun all the time, and make herb-tea three times a day ; and as for killing sheep, my husband thinks the farmers ought to agree to raise all the lambs to grow wool for the army. I don’t think there is any one more ready to

suffer than my husband and myself, as far as we have opportunities."

"Yes, madam, and we sha'n't be likely to lack 'em," said Mr. Burbean, a little nervously, as if conscious he was nearing a dangerous subject.

"And as for giving, I don't know who's done more than we," continued Mrs. Philbrick; "yarn, to knit stockings for the soldiers, and lead, and some pewter we ought not to have spared, to run into bullets, and flannel for blankets; and my husband gave more money than any one to fit out the last company with knapsacks and guns and bayonets."

"You never heard of my joining in saying your husband had n't done enough," returned Mr. Burbean, desirous to protect himself from any thought of blame. "It's a monstrous raw day," he added, turning the subject, "and you must n't stand out o' doors, madam." He gave his horse a cut with the short stick which

he carried by way of a whip, and started off, though Mrs. Philbrick would evidently have liked to detain him longer.

“Come in, niece! come in, nephew!” said Aunt Nancy, when he rode away, and led first into a long, wide hall, then into a parlor dark as Egypt, from the inside wooden shutters being closely drawn, then into a handsome sitting-room, of which the snow-white floor was sprinkled with shining sand, and the walls were covered with panel-work painted bright blue. A tray, with wineglasses and a silver tankard, adorned the heavy mahogany sideboard, and in the corner stood a tall clock with glistening peacock’s feathers nodding over it.

“What a lovely, genteel place!” thought Polly again; and yet her first sense of delight seemed somehow to have flown. Perhaps, she reasoned, it was because she was so cold; for she was shivering, and in the wide fireplace, with its elegant brass andirons, only a feeble

blue flame was fluttering over two moist green sticks.

Aunt Nancy helped Polly to take off her wrappings. She looked sharply at the scarlet cloak. "A very showy garment," she remarked, as she folded it up; and, taking off the protecting veil from Polly's fine "musk-melon hat," she examined it carefully, as if with a milliner's critical eye.

"If you want to warm your feet, you may come into the kitchen," she said, at last. And Peter and Polly followed into a large room that looked dark and cheerless, spite of the great fire on its hearth, from its walls being painted a dull Indian red, — a common color for working-rooms in those days. There were large beams in the ceiling, from which hung long strings of dried apples, tufts of herbs, bunches of onions, crook-necked squashes, and the glowing flame of bell-peppers. A tall girl, with a mulatto's complexion and crisp hair, but with something in her features and bear-

ing that suggested Indian blood as well, was stirring, with a long wooden stick, a kettle of boiling hominy that hung from the crane over the fire. She looked out of the corners of her eyes at the new-comers, as she moved about doing her housework ; and when she sat down with a pan of apples to be pared, she changed the place of her chair so as to be where she could still watch them. Under Aunt Nancy's eyes and the girl's, poor Polly felt between two fires. "If she could only have something to eat, perhaps it would seem more cheerful," she thought, as she smelt the hominy, for her long ride had made her hungry ; but Mrs. Philbrick made no mention of luncheon, and she concluded she must wait for the family supper.

"You had better warm your feet," said Aunt Nancy ; for Polly, sitting before the fire, had kept those offending members tucked away under her dress in a most peculiar fashion. Polly put them out towards the blaze,

timidly. What lumpy ankles she had ! What gouty-seeming legs ! She had changed about to-day, and by dint of pulling and tugging, and breaking a few stitches, had succeeded in drawing on her silk stockings over the legs of the yellow woollen ones. The feet she had nearly cut away. Aunt Nancy spied the trouble in a minute.

“ You have n’t put those nice silk ones over another pair of stockings, have you ? ” she asked.

“ Yes, madam, ” returned Polly, not knowing how to evade.

“ But you don’t wear silk stockings every day, do you ? ” continued her questioner.

“ O, no ! ” replied Polly ; but looking up, and seeing a pair of handsome jewelled knobs in her aunt’s ears, she thought it best to maintain her position as a young woman of fashion, — “ O, no ! but I have a good many pairs of them, a good many pairs. ”

Aunt Nancy’s face clouded. “ Well, if you

have, I hope you don't expect to wear them here," she said, in a somewhat severe tone. "Little girls like you, I am sure, have no need of finery ; and, even if you were older, it is more becoming for young women in times like these to be learning how to card and spin and weave, than to be thinking about bedizen-ing themselves with rich clothes."

"But father," began Polly, by way of apology, "bought and had made for me a good many things before I came, because he thought it would be harder to get them here, and be troublesome for you beside ; so he bought what he thought would last a long while, just as he got Peter's Latin books, so that he could have them for study as soon as he could get a teacher, to be fitted for college."

Aunt Nancy's face darkened again. "As for Peter," she said, turning to him, as he stood gloomily looking toward the fire, "your father writes me that you are exceeding fond of your books, and an apt scholar for your

years. I am very glad to find you have improved your advantages, for, I fear, in times like these, people will not have much leisure for study. A great many young men have gone to the war, and those that are left have to do double duty ; some schools are being closed for lack of teachers, and college educations will have to be scarce."

"But Peter," piped in Polly, always a little too ready to put in a word, "must study, whatever comes ; for father says it's a pity not to have him get all the learning he can, when he is such a forward lad ; and father left word —"

Peter shook his head savagely, to make her stop.

"Your father left word, I trust," said Aunt Nancy, with impressive solemnity, "that you should be obedient children, and do as your uncle and I see fit. We shall give you every advantage we think it right for you to have ; and if we deny you anything, we shall expect

you to realize that we know what is best for you, and do it for your good."

Polly saw the odd-looking colored girl glance up from her apple-paring with a queer twinkle in her black eyes. She was evidently pleased to have some one come in for a share of her mistress's counsels and reprimands.

"When you have warmed your feet, you had better come up stairs to your bedroom, and change your stockings, and I will help you to unpack your bags," said Aunt Nancy, after a long silence that had followed her last remark ; and Polly, completely subjugated, obeyed without a word.

It was a neat little chamber that she found ready for her reception. Its high-heaped, single bed, with its heavy quilt of blue and white woollen, was partially concealed by "hangings" of checked linen of the same color, and a snowy curtain, wrought with blue yarn, hung at the window ; but Polly's troubled eyes at once perceived that there was no

looking-glass upon the wall, and, what was worse, the one window looked out upon the graveyard, where the autumn wind now chased the dead leaves to and fro, over mounds covered with the brown frozen grass, — desolate, unmarked graves, for there were but four or five headstones in the whole enclosure. As for unpacking the bags, Aunt Nancy certainly performed her task thoroughly. She pulled out every article, and examined it minutely before she laid it by. She noticed the trimming of the dresses, the quality of the linen under-garments, the sewing of the patchwork pocket, and the starching of the tuckers ; she contemptuously sniffed at the sight of the unlucky sampler, and even peered into Polly's box of mementos, locks of hair and scraps of copied verses, the costless keepsakes of her childish friends.

“There is a cousin of my mother's living near here, is there not ?” asked Polly, “a lady named Miss Keziah Hapgood. My father

wanted me to find if there was, and to go and visit her if she asked me, for he was sure she would be kind to me for my mother's sake."

"There is such a person," answered Mrs. Philbrick, coldly, and counting over Polly's pairs of stockings as she did so, "but she does not live near here, and — she — is not a person I have — a great deal to do with," she added slowly, as if reflecting what to say. "As for your clothes, I fear they are unseemly fine for a girl of your age," she remarked, when her scrutiny of them was completed.

Poor Polly! The charm had flown from Aunt Nancy. She seemed plainer to her than even Mr. Burbean in his coarse coat and greasy buckskins. She quite envied Peter his boy's privileges; for he, meanwhile, had left the house and gone down to his uncle's store, the only one in the neighborhood.

The store was a long, low building with two doors, outside of which a half-dozen ox-teams were standing, while within the room

was almost filled by customers and village loungers.

At one end a great fire was roaring, and round it a group of teamsters was gathered, while near by was a small counter set with mugs and glasses in front of a deep shelf displaying jugs and decanters and various pewter measures. Behind the counter stood a handsome man of fifty-five, busy, when Peter entered, in filling from a brown jug a wooden bottle for a red-faced man wearing a shoemaker's apron. He came forward and greeted Peter cordially. "And this is the nephew who has come to be a son to me!" he said, taking the boy's hand warmly in his own; "but since we shall have plenty of time to talk together, and as to-day is one of my busiest, when, as you see, I am taking a clerk's place, I trust you will look about for yourself till I am at leisure."

Peter, thus encouraged, and anxious to guess at his future, boy like, sauntered round

with his eyes wide open to see everything to be seen.

What a busy, busy place it was!

There were more customers than Mr. Philbrick and his assistant could possibly attend to. Here was a woman trying to barter some green cheeses, flavored with johnswort and tanzy, in part payment for a linen-wheel; there, a rough-looking boy was endeavoring to dispose of a half-dozen hog-yokes, made by himself; while a coquettish miss, with her hair drawn over an immensely high cushion, was making a poor bargain, for herself, by exchanging a quantity of woollen yarn for a tall horn comb and a necklace of showy beads. Suddenly the loud talk around the fireplace was checked; a little man with rosy face and snow-white wig appeared at the door; Mr. Philbrick hastened immediately to serve him, bowing low and respectfully; and without being told, even Peter was at once aware of the presence of the village preacher.

From floor to ceiling the store was filled with articles of merchandise. Home-made cloths, linen, tow, and woollen, wooden ware of all kinds, "wheels within wheels," candlesticks and warming-pans, hoes, rakes, and shovels, medicines for the sick, and ribbons and laces for the would-be fair, — nothing was wanting. In the back part of the building were large bins heaped with grain, and one small apartment divided from the main room was partially filled with skins and furs; for Mr. Philbrick had driven, heretofore, a brisk trade with hunters and trappers. Black-bear skins and gray wolves', silver fox and red, mountain cat and wolverine, glossy mink and soft brown beaver, — how many brookside builders, how many fierce wild creatures of the forest, were represented by those heaps of fur! As for the piles of deer and moose hides, Peter scarcely gave them a look.

Surely, there was enough both to see and to hear in this little store; yet Peter gazed

about with a stranger's homesick heart, and, for some unknown reason, felt by no means drawn toward his uncle. He wondered at himself that he was not ; for Mr. Philbrick seemed, certainly, as his father had described him, "a gentleman, both in looks and bearing" ; not tall, but straight, with finely shapen limbs, a beauty much appreciated in those days. His complexion was clear, and his features handsome, only his eyes had a cold, hard look, and the smile which constantly played about his mouth had a frigid brightness, like ice in the sun. His dress, like his wife's, was of the best quality of homespun ; but the value of his shoe and knee buckles, and the fineness of his shirt-ruffles, proved him to be by no means forgetful of the refinements of dress. The throng of customers, many of whom had a considerable distance to go home, all departed before the brief autumn day had fairly passed, and Mr. Philbrick threw round him his long cloak to go home to his supper.

“Nephew,” he said, as Peter walked beside him, “I have heard, from your father, of your ready parts and your industry as a scholar, and, when circumstances permit, we shall be most happy to obtain for you some master who will be able to further you in your studies. Till then, with all respect to the Greek and the Latin, I think the best thing you can do is to try and obtain a practical knowledge, both of the use and the properties of figures, such as you will acquire in trade; and for this purpose I intend to give you a place at the little counter near the fireplace, where you found me, myself, to-day. It will be light work,—all you will have to do is to measure out for the various customers the different kinds of spirits they may want, and to see to keeping their scores,—very light work; or, if some woman comes in and wants a bodkin, or some cap-lace, or such trifling thing, if you are not otherwise busy, you can attend to her;—no hard labor, and

a great deal of knowledge to be gained. Everything in its place, my lad ; Greek and Latin in theirs, and trade in its own. You will always be the wiser for a little practical knowledge of the use of figures."

More sober-looking young folks are seldom seen than the two who sat opposite each other at Mrs. Philbrick's supper-table. The keen-eyed maid-servant glanced first at one, then at the other, and then smiled to herself, when she brought in a plate of hot fire-cakes. Polly's heart was so full of her troubles that even her traveller's appetite was gone ; the hominy tasted to her like "bread of affliction," the catnip tea like a bitter draught. She almost wished her cup could have been filled from the little pot that stood by her aunt's plate, and from which she replenished her husband's teacup and her own. That little pot breathed round it an odor which made Polly think of what she did not, could not believe would be in any honest American

house. "That was too much to suspect of people!" she thought, as she trifled with her pretty little silver teaspoon. It was marked on the handle, "J. Millin."

"Millin? Millin?" what was it connected with that name? At last it came to her, — the teamster's story of the young bridegroom in the gold-laced coat, and the dark-eyed boy watching his father's corpse under the white-blossomed elder. "The same name," she thought, too full of her own dull forebodings to dwell long on anything not directly concerning herself.

"Polly," said Peter, when, after supper, they were alone together for a few moments, — "Polly, I am afraid we sha' n't be very happy here."

"Afraid?" said Polly; "I am monstrous miserable already!"

"Uncle Philbrick wants me to help in the store, and, if I do, how can I study at all?" asked Peter.

“And Aunt Nancy only likes to have me wear dreadful clothes,” bemoaned Polly.

“Well,” said Peter, as his father had wished, discreet beyond his years, “if we are not happy, let us keep our mouths shut and be quiet; that is the best thing that people in trouble can do.”

Becky, the mulatto-girl, went up with Polly to her room at night, to carry the candle and see her in bed. “Ye’r gitting lonesum? And how d’ye think ye’r goin to like?” she asked, trying to make acquaintance. But Polly, just ready to cry, was in no mood to be approached, and gave, perhaps, too curt a reply. The girl felt it. She laid down Polly’s little mourning necklace, which she had taken up to examine, and snatched up the candle with a malicious twinkle in her eyes. “I hope yer’ll sleep well, but I should n’t like to be so near that graveyard; more’n one have seen them dead folks walkin’,” she said, shutting the door as she did so, and hurrying down stairs, chuckling to herself.

Poor Polly drew the curtains close, and hid her head under the sheet, till she heard the great clock below strike the hour of midnight. It seemed such a gloomy, dreary place she was in ! like a queen in a dungeon-cell, or a maid forlorn in a castle-tower ; and then it was such a perplexing puzzle ! Her aunt's inconsistent harshness in speaking of Polly's fine clothes, and her evident fondness for wearing them herself ; the boastful mention of herb-tea to Mr. Burbean, and the little pot by her plate ; the fine house, the costly table-china, the odd servant-girl with her Indian form and her mulatto skin and her twinkling eyes, — all to her were mysteries. Wondering over them, she dropped asleep. Peter, in the little chamber on the other side of the house, sat up for a long while and looked out of the window at the orchard, where the tall trees stood, leafless and cheerless in the white moonlight. His boy life had but one ambition. "Come what may," he said, over and over to him-

self, "I will, in some way, be fitted for college!"

Had Polly been older and shrewder, she would not have seen so much to surprise her in her uncle's and aunt's demeanor. Their conduct was, in a worldly view, a perfectly natural course. Abel Philbrick had in his boyhood been poor himself and thrown with men of wealth. The sense of contrast between his position and theirs had nursed in him an intense desire for riches and power, which had made itself the guiding motive of his life. By perseverance, sagacity, strict economy, and the most untiring industry, he had become possessed of what was in those days a considerable fortune, while yet a young man, and could, had he so chosen, have made himself a pleasant home in one of the older towns of New England. But, to be "second in Rome" was not to his mind; and he accordingly turned his thoughts toward the younger settlements in New Hampshire, where, thought he, "I could

lead instead of follow, and my power, if limited, would be undisputed."

But the way of a would-be leader is not always a primrose path. The sturdy settlers in the neighborhood to which he came were as independent thinkers as himself, and their wives in their tow aprons were by no means inclined to pay much deference to his handsome bride in her wedding brocade. In fact, they soon found themselves standing quite alone in society. But if not loved or admired, Abel Philbrick soon made himself an object of fear. He was the only person in the neighborhood whose property enabled him to be a habitual money-lender to the hard-pressed men, frequently in want of the actual necessities of life about him. He established, also, a small store, where he sold largely upon trust, and made sharp bargains in barter-trades. Woe to the delinquent debtor when pay-day came round! He found he must deal with a man who, "even to the

uttermost farthing," would "demand his own with usury"; and that, too, in a time when there was scarcely an article of food, clothing, or household stuff which it was not allowable for a creditor to seize upon. Improved lands thus came into his possession, cleared and made fit for cultivation by their first unfortunate holders; cattle which luckless farmers had sought to raise for themselves browsed in his pastures and fed in his stalls. His fine new house was filled with looking-glasses, tables, silver and pewter ware, and irons and candlesticks, which had once belonged to other owners. It is impossible to conceive the bitterness of feeling which those who had, sometimes justly, been obliged to yield up such articles of household use and necessity, and were suffering for the want of them, often felt toward the person that had taken them. But the doubtfully gotten wealth which had made Mr. Philbrick many secret enemies in his own township had served to

recommend him in other communities. Conscious that his new fortunes made him more nearly their equal, he revived his old acquaintance with two or three families residing near Portsmouth, and through their influence and favor he received from the Governor and Council an appointment as agent, or under-surveyor, of "The King's Woods." It was his care to see that none of the tall white-pines, which, by British law, were reserved for the use of the royal navy, were cut without his authority. The largest of these trees were marked, and a register was kept of them, and a considerable fine exacted from any one who had been found disobeying the law by cutting one, or from any hapless husbandman who, in clearing his own land, had been so unfortunate as to damage one growing upon it. In the exactions of these fines Mr. Philbrick was exceedingly strict, and would abate nothing; though some suspicious persons hinted their doubts if the

king's treasury was ever much richer for his extreme zeal in collecting them. Year by year, Mr. Philbrick's fortune increased, while his ambition grew with it, and his style of living became more costly. His wife sent to Portsmouth for stiff silk dresses and real laces. Their table was set with daintiest china, and, as a crowning act, they purchased a chaise, in which, over the rough roads around, they scarcely dared to ride about. But at last even they found themselves under a shadow. The trouble between the mother-land and our own became more and more an acknowledged fact. "The air was full of freedom." The plain-spoken common people woke to a new sense of their dignity as "sons of liberty." Mr. Philbrick thought it best to overlook the wanton cutting of King George's pines for the present. He said nothing, and hoped the gathering storm would pass by; but no, the feeling was too deep to be transient. The leading

spirit of the place was the minister, a daring little man, Parson Piper, who loved to rule by nature, and whose office in those days gave to him the power to do so in reality. An ardent politician, who never knew the name of fear, and whom a little opposition would only rouse to make more outspoken, his sermons were at this time about as peace-breathing as the Marseillaise Hymn. In his pastoral calls, his conversation stirred up the people to resistance to oppression like the sounding of a fife. By and by, the reports came of the battles of Lexington and Concord, and afterwards of Bunker Hill. Like one man, the people were united. Poor "Pine Abel," as in derision he was called, found himself in a hard place. Some zealous patriots banded themselves together not to buy anything at his store, or have any dealings with him, until his position should be satisfactorily explained. "Brown Beck," a slave-girl of mixed white, Indian, and negro

blood, whom Mr. Philbrick, like most of his possessions, had taken in payment for debt, brought to her mistress a startling tale of a plan by some lawless young fellows of paying up old scores by riotous proceedings against her master. It never seemed to occur to her master and mistress that Brown Beck was "as good to carry as to fetch," and, by her exaggerated revelation of affairs in the household,—of the little pot by her mistress's plate, and of mysterious words dropped by her master,—had done much to awaken prejudice against them, and even to sow suspicions which were wholly unfounded among the lower classes of the village gossips.

Mr. Philbrick found he must take a decided stand, although, in truth, beyond his own interests, he had little concern as to what form public affairs might assume. Accordingly, in a gathering of the townsfolk, he took the opportunity of declaring his position in a speech, whose fervor, he thought, would

make amends for his delay. He urged the young men to enter the newly formed army, and called on parents to offer their sons, and wives their husbands, on the altar of freedom.

His wife laid by her costly dresses, and talked of economy, frugality, and devotion to her country wherever she went; for poor Aunt Nancy was fond of display, and must make a show of her patriotism, as she had done before of her wealth and station. Besides, Brown Beck's accounts had sorely frightened her. She thought if her brother should enter the army, and her niece and nephew come to her during his absence, their presence would be, in a measure, a protection to her husband; for, with all her faults, she was a devoted wife. But when Peter and Polly appeared, — Polly with the fine clothes which she feared would scandalize the frugal-minded neighbors, whom now she wished to please; and Peter with a letter from his father requesting the procurement

for him of some teacher in Latin and Greek, just when the penny-saving Mr. Philbrick (whose best clerk had left for the army) had concluded to make him of service in the store, — she was perplexed and troubled.

She had other troubles as well, for her husband's business anxieties she made her own, and just then he was full of them. He had lent large sums of money in such a way, that, could he have collected his dues as usual, it would have added greatly to his wealth to have done so. As it was, should his debtors choose to pay in the newly issued paper currency, of which, with his shrewd eyes, he already stood in dread, — what then?

That was what Aunt Nancy was always asking herself when she had a sharp word for Brown Beck or a cross look for Polly.





CHAPTER V.

IT was a bright Sunday morning in December. Polly sat in her uncle's great pew in the meeting-house, slyly looking around her, it is to be feared, rather than listening to the sermon. She had on her fine hat and her scarlet cloak trimmed with fur; but she had been made to wear her common dress rather than her best one, and over her shoulders was pinned a checked homespun neckerchief, to make her look more as a "girl of the period" should, in her Aunt Nancy's eyes.

The meeting-house was yet unfinished; for, although

"Great church, high steeple,
Proud committee, poor people,"

was a descriptive rhyme of the time, it was still true that "pay as you go" was more the motto of church-builders than it is to-day. It was now seven years since the raising of the meeting-house frame ; but though, every town-meeting since, some appropriation had been made, there was still much remaining to be done toward completing the building. There was, as yet, no gallery in the place designed for it, and some of the gallery windows were unglazed, and boarded up until glass could be procured ; the floor of the house had been "lotted," — that is, the aisles and the location of each pew had been chalked upon the floor, and a committee had been appointed to decide what families should build upon the different lots, — but times were hard, and only three men, Justice Cram, Mr. Philbrick, and the village doctor, had availed themselves of the right to erect one, though, at the public expense, a pew had also been provided for the minister's family. The rest of the audience

still sat on benches. They were very grand and genteel things to have, those pews "with winscot work." Polly felt quite like a superior being, as, seated in her uncle's, she peered round at the congregation a little more than was becoming a temple worshipper ; at the old men in their red flannel caps, and the old women with their great muffs ; at Parson Piper's large brood of little folks all trying to get their feet on one small foot-stove ; at the solemn-looking deacons, who, like the minister, faced the assembly, while in front of their seat hung on hinges a semicircular board, which served as a table on sacramental days.

Parson Piper, this morning, looked unusually bright and rosy, and in his fervent supplications for the triumph of freedom's cause, and the protection of freedom's army, so lost thought of all around him, as nearly to forget to pray for poor Mr. Burbean, who had sent in a note, having just buried his fourteenth child.

After the long prayer, Parson Piper lined out a hymn, one of Tate and Brady's, which collection had not, in this country place, yet given way to the more modern Watts. How one of the deacons scowled during the singing! Polly could not help seeing his discomfiture. A bass-viol had just been introduced into the singers' seat, a large square, walled in like a pen, opposite the pulpit, with a long table for the singers to lay their books upon. Against the use of this instrument the deacon had testified in vain. "The Lord's house is not the place for fiddling," he had said, and its profane notes were never heard but his face showed forth his disapprobation. But one good thing the viol did: it helped to drown the singers' voices; for music then, throughout the country, was a little-cared-for art, and in this inland parish had been more neglected even than in other places; the Rev. Shearjashub Smith, Parson Piper's predecessor, having been a narrow-minded man of the pattern

of fifty years before, looking with disfavor on all new movements, and thinking singing by note, instead of by rote, a dangerous innovation little short of sin.

When the text was given out, "The arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholdeth the righteous," everybody knew that the sermon would be one for the times. Polly wondered, as she listened, whether old King George's ears were not burning, over the sea ; she was sure they would be, could he have been in her place.

On one side of the meeting-house, directly in the range of Polly's gaze, was a long bench, on which the boys were seated. Here sat half a dozen lads, of about ten or twelve years, and one somewhat older, fifteen or thereabouts. He was coarsely dressed, and in garments far too thin for the day. His tow frock had a poverty-stricken look, and it made Polly almost shiver to see it in that unwarmed house. Round his neck, however, was a warm black

and red woollen muffler. That was better than nothing, Polly thought, for she had a tender heart, and never saw anything like discomfort without a desire to relieve it ; yet she did not quite dare to pity him, when by chance he turned his head and she saw his face fully. It had such a daring, resolute look, such a fixed expression of determined purpose, that pity seemed an unworthy feeling to have for him. And still there was a patient sadness in his large dark eyes, that made even Polly sure he was not only poor, but lonely and in trouble. She was wondering what that trouble might be, when Price Hodgkins, the tithing-man, a distant relative of her uncle, and a clerk in his store, came up the aisle. It was part of the tithing-man's duties to prevent travel on the Sabbath, and to maintain order in the Sunday services, to drive out the dogs from the sanctuary, and to see that the boys, who were boys even in those days, were not carrying things with too high a hand. Such persons were not

unnneeded, for the congregations of that time were much larger, and far more mixed, than those of to-day. The boys and younger people often sat together, and some eye to overlook them seemed, in many cases, indispensable. But Price Hodgkins, a short, fidgety man, with a fondness for giving raps and cuffs, magnified his office, and was always looking round for a chance to exercise his authority. To-day he thought there was a disturbance among the boys, and made haste to bring the offender to punishment. But, with all his zeal, he had a time-serving heart, and, though he must have seen that the real culprit was Caleb Cram, a restless boy of thirteen, Justice Cram's only son, who was amusing himself by sticking hedgehog-quills, which he had brought with him for his entertainment, into the chubby youngster who sat next him, and though, by good rights, he should have been in his father's pew, the tithing-man dared not touch him, but gave a sharp rap, with his long staff,

at the older lad with the tow frock. It was quite safe to do that ! A bitter look of wounded pride and injured feeling came into the boy's face ; a sense of injustice made his dark eyes flash. He bit his lip, as if trying to conceal how cruelly he had been hurt.

" It's a shame ! " said Polly, in a whisper to Peter, beside her.

Peter looked up, wondering ; his eyes had been fixed on the preacher, and he had seen nothing.

Aunt Nancy shook her head at Polly ; but, though she ceased to glance about, she could not bring her thought back to Parson Piper and his sermon. That terrible enigma of life began to puzzle her. " Whence comes all this pain and trouble in the world, and why is it so unequally divided ? " She was anxiously pondering the question, in her blind, childish way, when she found the " finally, brethren," of the sermon was fairly passed, and the people were rising for the last prayer. As she went out

with her aunt, she saw, on the negroes' bench by the door, Brown Beck, with a yellow kerchief round her neck, looking disdainfully down on old Pompey, Justice Cram's man of all work, a patient, pious old negro, the only other slave in the place. Just outside the door, in a big beaver bonnet, and large cloak of brown stuff, was a woman of perhaps forty-five years of age, singularly straight and tall, and well proportioned. Toil, care, and trouble, — one saw from a glance at her strongly marked yet gentle countenance that she had met them all, and met them with cheerful endurance and fearless strength. Polly, coming down the meeting-house steps, felt her hand clasped by a firm grasp, like that of a man. "I want to ask you," said the tall woman, "if you are Mrs. Philbrick's niece, and Dr. Peter Austin's little girl."

"Yes, madam, I am," answered Polly.

"Then," said the stranger, "you must be my cousin Polly's daughter. I knew that you

must be, when I saw you in the pew, for you have your mother's face, and I love you for it ! And I am your mother's cousin, of whom, perhaps, you have heard her speak, Keziah Hapgood."

"I have, indeed !" said Polly. "She did a little while before she died, and told how she used to play with you, and be at your house when you were children together. My father said he thought you lived near here, and bade us ask about you of Aunt Nancy ; and I believe Peter has a letter for you, which father wrote, and laid in our Bible, for us to give you if we saw you ; but Aunt Nancy never told us you went to this meeting."

"Well," said Miss Keziah, "if that is so, I will walk over with you to your uncle's house, and get it. I have wanted to hear from your family ever since your Uncle Philbrick told me of your mother's death, and have thought very often of you, and, if your uncle and aunt are willing, I shall want you and your brother

to come over to my house, as soon as may be, and make me a long visit."

"I am sure I should like to do so," said Polly, quite wondering at her inclination; for Miss Keziah was anything but the "genteel lady," who had always been the ideal of her fancy; but the tall Amazon brought with her such a sense of love and protection, that she clung to her instinctively.

Just at that moment the lad in the tow frock passed by. Miss Keziah laid her large hand, from which she had drawn the knit woollen glove, upon his arm. "Rob," she said gently, "don't be discouraged. Fear God and naught else. I saw you this morning, and you were not to blame."

"And I saw too!" put in Polly, always ready for a word, and thinking her scarlet cloak gave her dignity enough to speak first. "I was very sorry, and the tithing-man was very unjust."

The boy blushed and smiled. His toilful

life had made him feel so much older than herself, that Polly's forward sympathy seemed to him like the friendliness of a kind-hearted child; yet he had seen enough of hard usage, and he valued it none the less. Mrs. Philbrick, who had stopped for a word with Mrs. Cram, came down the steps just then, and looked somewhat sourly when she saw Miss Hapgood speaking with her niece. She greeted her, however, with decent civility, and the three walked together to the house.

The families who lived in close proximity to a meeting-house were, on Sunday noons, expected to keep open doors. Round their cheery fireplaces the people, who had come in from all sides of the neighboring country, used to meet, and replenish the iron pans of coals, which they carried in their tin footstoves, eat their luncheons of bread and cheese, discuss the sermon or the "doctrines," whisper low the floating gossip, and pass round the cider-mugs. Now, on these occa-

sions, the state of the country was the one subject of conversation, often dwelt upon with such faith in God's protecting care for what they deemed his cause, as to make it seem the most fitting theme for the day. Mr. Philbrick's, though so near the meeting-house, had never been a favorite Sabbath gathering-place, but there were, commonly, a few who met there: Price Hodgkins, the tithing-man; and sometimes Justice Cram and his wife, for whom Mrs. Philbrick never failed to bring out a little of their choicest spirit in decanters; and, on rare occasions, Parson Piper himself, who liked to argue upon Arminianism, Antinomianism, Election, Baptism, and the Half-way Covenant with Aunt Nancy, who had a taste for theological controversy.

To-day, all these were there, and Mr. and Mrs. Burbean; she with a mourning-scarf, in token of her affliction, and he with a pair of black gloves. It was the first time that Parson Piper had come in, at such a time, since

Mr. Philbrick's patriotism was called in question ; but to-day he was in good temper with all the world, except the British. The advice which the general Congress had given the delegates from the late Exeter Convention, the glorious prospect that New Hampshire would take the lead in assuming a certain form of self-government, till the present difficulties were over, were, to him, so cheering and inspiring, that he could scarcely find words to express himself, however dark things might seem from another outlook. As for Justice Cram, he was quite as ready for the new venture as the preacher, only for another reason ; for he, alas, had creditors in England, and the wider the disruption between the two countries the easier it was to leave them unpaid.

The last war-news which the weekly post-rider had brought was of the capture of the brig Nancy, an ordnance-ship from Woolwich, with brass cannon and large stores of ammuni-

tion, triply precious when the Colonial army stood in so much need of them.

“‘The arms of the wicked shall be broken,’” said Parson Piper, repeating his text. “I had another sermon, nearly finished, on ‘Inherent Holiness,’ but when Seth Kelly rode up with the news, I laid it away; the text I preached on this morning came straight to my mind, ‘The arms of the wicked shall be broken’; the weapons they have forged shall be turned against themselves.”

“They are a wicked set,” said Justice Cram, who had a vivid sense of the iniquities of other men, although he bore a somewhat doubtful reputation himself, — “a monstrous wicked set, those redcoats. It’s enough to call down fire from heaven, the doings of those troops shut up in Boston, — taking the Lord’s house to make a riding-school building; and that’s what Seth Kelly said they were doing, the villains!”

“Those British officers,” said Parson Piper,

“have a persecuting spite against all the Presbyterian ministers and meeting-houses, for they call everybody Presbyterian that does n’t belong to the Church of England. They’d call me so, though I am one no more than a Quaker. As for Episcopacy, it is the child of Papacy. I should have liked it better if our Commander-in-Chief had had a good old Puritan education.”

“And so should I,” said Aunt Nancy; “a man that hain’t sound doctrinal views won’t be what can be relied on in other matters.”

“I don’t know about that!” said Mr. Philbrick, who, when he was surveyor of his Majesty’s woods, had secretly felt a certain drawing toward the Church of England; “there are different views as regards Episcopacy. What Washington needs is courage to press the British a little harder. If Howe should have to give up Boston, in my opinion, it would bring the war to a close; and what we want is as speedy a termination of this

controversy as we can have consistently with dignity."

"Well, I think things look dark!" said Mr. Burbean. "It will take a long time to pay up, so far as the war has gone, even if peace should come to-day."

"What costs nothing is worth nothing," said Cousin Keziah; "and freedom is worth having, even if it is bought with blood!"

"Amen!" said Parson Piper, solemnly; "'Though an host should encamp about me, mine heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.'"

Polly ran up stairs to get the letter her father had sent; and Miss Keziah, when she had received it, rose to take her leave, not stopping to taste the Madeira that had been brought forward in honor of the Crams; for the Justice was a man of influence, and his wife, though now a wrinkled old woman, who found her chief happiness in her snuff-box, had once

been an heiress in Newburyport, and had brought her husband a large fortune.

“Won’t you stay and have your stove filled?” asked Mrs. Philbrick of Miss Keziah, as she tied her bonnet and joined the clasp of her cloak.

“I brought no stove; I never use one,” said Miss Hapgood, a little proudly, conscious of the superb constitution which enabled her to sit for hours in the unwarmed meeting-house, in December, with no sense of discomfort.

“Well, there!” exclaimed Mrs. Cram; “you ain’t much like me. My husband says I’d like to use a warming-pan all summer!”

Miss Hapgood broke the seal of her letter, and briefly glanced at its contents before she left.

“Their father writes very kindly,” she said to Mrs. Philbrick; “and, if you are willing, I want your niece and nephew to come to my house and make me a long visit. I will send for them with the horse-sled, or—it is only a

little walk, three miles and a quarter — they can run over some morning.”

“ Well, some time, some time, I will let them come, perhaps,” said Aunt Nancy, a little nervously, for it was a sore point with her that her young relatives had a kinswoman on their mother’s side living so near them ; a person, too, of so decided a character as Miss Hapgood. She did not wish to encourage an intimacy between them, nor, on the other side, did she wish to appear anxious to avoid it.

“ She is a singular kind of woman,” said Mrs. Philbrick, as the door closed behind her.

“ I should think so, not to use a foot-stove,” returned Mrs. Cram. “ It freezes me to think of it ! ”

“ O, not that ! ” said Mrs. Philbrick, “ but she’s a terrible outspoken, fear-naught sort of a woman. Why, to-day, I saw her talking with that Rob Millin as friendly as you please, and, what is worse, when Polly here was with her ; and a monstrous wicked boy he must

be ; to think of a lad of his size being rapped by the tithing-man as he was this morning ! Shameful !”

“ Rob Millin ? He’s the shoemaker’s ’prentice, ain’t he ? ” asked Mrs. Cram. “ Well, I overheard Caleb say ‘ he did n’t want aught to do with him ’ ; and, if I do say it, there is n’t a better boy than my Caleb is, anywhere. But then, the boy’s an orphan. I have some pity for him,” she added.

“ But his father was a poor, broken-down spendthrift, who could n’t have done much for him if he had lived ! ” said Mrs. Philbrick, as she rose and brushed a few ashes from the hearth into the fire, as if, in doing so, she were ridding herself of a reproachful memory.

“ Rob Millin ! ” Polly, overhearing the conversation, almost started at the name. Could it be, in truth, that the dark-eyed boy in the tow frock and the ill-starred orphan of the teamster’s story were the same ? If so, it

seemed as though her Uncle Abel could be none other than the hard-hearted creditor of whom he had spoken. She looked at him as he sat in the arm-chair in front of the fireplace. Ostentatiously dressed in homespun throughout, his white hands (a large seal-ring on one of them) crossed upon his knee with its shining buckle, carefully shaven, neatly powdered, he was a pleasant picture of the country gentleman of the day; and yet she turned from him almost with a sense of aversion.

She went into the kitchen, where Peter, having no other book, was reading aloud from the Assembly's Catechism to old Pompey, who had come in with two great foot-stoves to fill for his Master and Mistress Cram; while four little Pipers, whom the good parson had brought with him (for, in this parish, the parsonage buildings and the minister's farm were, contrary to the usual custom, at some distance from the meeting-house), were eating dough-

nuts, which they had brought with them in a blue linen bag, and Brown Beck was whispering to a stout woman in a red gown, who had come in with her. "One pair" — she heard her say.





CHAPTER VI.

IT was a long, dreary winter that opened before Polly, and often with a shiver she thought of the army keeping guard around Boston ; for her father, who was with them, had written of their sufferings in one precious letter which the post-rider brought on a snowy afternoon. The shrill north-wind had, for her, a new sound. She thought, as she heard its whistle, of the soldiers struggling northward, under the brave young Arnold, the godlike hero of her childish admiration ; or, when it wailed in the naked branches, it brought a vision of the wretched inhabitants still lingering in Boston, of whom her father had said in his letter, “it was reported by

rumor they were suffering extremely from the cold, many often lying in bed all day, because they could afford no fires."

"But that is an idle, slovenly way of keeping warm," thought Polly; "I would keep up and move about till I did freeze, if I were they!" For motion was, to her restless self, one of the prime elements of happiness, and the strict restraint under which her Aunt Nancy held her, and the dull monotony of her daily life, grew all the time more and more wearisome. If she could only get out and have some companionship, or excitement, or adventures! If she were a man with a foe to fight and a cause to win, or a woman, who could have some part in the stirring scenes of the time, it seemed to her she would not complain. But to stay, week after week, shut up in this house, only breathing a clear space on the frost-whitened window, and looking out on the drifted highways, where the teamsters broke the path with their over-worked oxen, on the hemlock

woods and ice-bound river, and to feel that she had no work to share, and no pleasures to enjoy, was very dull indeed.

Mrs. Philbrick, like most matrons without children, had her own ideas of the training of young persons, especially of girls, and Polly was a good subject for the application of her theories. If her rules did not work to her satisfaction, the fault was always in Polly, and not in her system of education. Young people should, in her belief, be seen and not heard ; speak when they were spoken to, and come when they were called ; be, in fact, mere puppets in the hands of parents and guardians, and yet instinctively be fitted, when the time should come, to act their parts as men and women, with honor to themselves and their instructors ; for Mrs. Philbrick was never inclined to judge too leniently those who might prove themselves failures in the end.

“If I could only go to school!” thought Polly, with less concern, perhaps, for the

knowledge to be gained than for the company she would enjoy ; but there was, alas ! that winter, no school for her to attend. The interest in the war, so universally felt, had, for the time, made everything else seem of minor importance ; and, though each town of a hundred families was required by law to have a " grammar school," where the " learned languages " should be taught, and every town of fifty families a school for reading, writing, and arithmetic, many places of considerable size and importance were that winter destitute of either.

" To have none is a shame and a disgrace ! " said Parson Piper ; but even he was so absorbed with the proceedings of the Exeter Convention, that he had little time to give to other matters, that body having adopted a constitution which had called forth a protest from the people of Portsmouth, and had startled the timid throughout the Colonies. " Only, what my parish fails in doing now," thought

he, "I will see to it they make amends for, by having more costly teachers and longer schools another year." For Parson Piper was a well-meaning tyrant, and believed in ministerial authority.

Without a school, Polly had no excuse for going out every day; walking for exercise was a thing unheard of, and so she was shut up all the week, only peeping out when Sunday came round. "The proper place for a woman is at home," said Aunt Nancy, whose own rheumatic twinges scarce allowed her to put her foot upon the snow; "and here, with food and shelter, and clothes far too fine for a girl of your age, if you are not happy you must be very sinful."

If it is sinful to be impatient of confinement, Polly certainly was so, for she was discontented as a caged hawk. How many arts she used to drive dull care away! In how many tasks she strove to find diversion! She wrought on her sampler and finished it; she

hemmed long ruffles ; she begged bits of cloth and began some patchwork ; again and again she turned the pages of each book in the house, as well she might ; for, nicely furnished as it was, there were only six in it besides the Bible : “ Law’s Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,” quite a sprightly book Polly found it, in spite of its title ; a book of “ Sermons to Young Women,” doubly unattractive because her Aunt Nancy had said “ it would be an excellent thing for her to read ” ; a handsomely bound copy of “ Paradise Lost,” with “ John Millin to his affectionate wife, Miranda,” written on the fly-leaf ; Tate and Brady’s Hymns ; a sermon entitled “ Woe to Sleepy Sinners ” ; and a quaint old book, by Cotton Mather and other writers, which was made up chiefly of witch-stories and speculations in regard to them. Polly was half sorry she had found this last volume, for the tales in it would come back and haunt her when, at night, she went to her little room overlook-

ing the graveyard. "They were all foolish fancies," she kept repeating to herself, as she lay awake at night, with the sheet over her face, and yet she could scarcely keep them out of her mind. Against her will she seemed to see, with her closed eyes, scowling witches flitting through the midnight air, meeting for unholy baptisms, or partaking of mock sacraments, where the bread was "read as blood"; satanic cats, prowling round on errands for their master; "witch-poppets," stuck full of pins; ill-omened yellow-birds, flying hither and thither, like golden feathered imps, — these "frightly" fancies were sure to haunt her as long as she was awake, and when, at last, she dropped asleep, it was only to be troubled by some ghostly dream. She did not dare to say one word to Peter. "If she was afraid at night," she thought, "at least, he should never have the comfort of teasing her about it."

It would have been better for her if she could have seen more of her brother; but all

through the day he was with his uncle at the store, and, when evening came, they were sent off to their rooms by half past eight o'clock, at most ; for "early to bed and early to rise," was a motto then enforced, and nine o'clock was curfew-time for all wise families. As for talking freely with her brother in the presence of her uncle and aunt, could she otherwise have enjoyed it, that would scarcely have been deemed respectful to her elders. Her aunt, it is true, made conversation enough, but her remarks were apt to be so interspersed with advice and reproof, to which Polly felt a natural, though sometimes unjustifiable dislike, that her society had little charm for the ardent girl ; while, as for visitors at the house, "they were, in those hard times," Aunt Nancy somewhat inhospitably said, "the worst of moths" ; and even the neighbors round, conscious that Mrs. Philbrick held herself above them, came in infrequently and with shy formality.

Polly's only resource, therefore, in the long dreary days, was the kitchen and Brown Beck, who, whatever were her faults, was certainly not dull company; for her tongue, in her talkative moods, ran like a miller's wheel, and she was always glad to have Polly with her, as she sat, in the afternoon, knitting, or combing wool, with the crooked wire teeth of her cards, into rolls for the evening spinning. She was a strange creature, whose mother was a mulatto slave, and her father a low Indian trapper, and her half-savage blood showed in a hundred different ways. It was her delight to relate most marvellous stories, which well supplemented those in Cotton Mather's witch-book: of a woman, whose soul used to go in and out of her mouth in the shape of a spider; of a wailing ghost, that haunted the old garri-son at the end of the village; of magic charms and spells to lure good fortune, bring success in love, or drive away poverty and sickness. As for her own history, it was, to judge from

her words, a most wonderful one. What suffering she had endured ! through what dangers safely passed ! perils by land and by sea, — though how that could be was a mystery, for she told Polly she had never seen the ocean ; and Catechism-taught Polly scarcely dared believe of any one that she willingly would lie.

She was always asking odd questions about Mr. and Mrs Philbrick, which Polly instinctively resented, and to which she made no reply ; but, finding that Polly had a certain dread of the graveyard beneath her chamber, she vouchsafed a little advice.

“ If I were you,” she said, “ I should n’t be afraid after I was fairly in bed ; get a blanket over your face, and I don’t think anything will touch you ; but I must say, if I were you, I should n’t like to go up in that room as you will daytimes ; I think, if there are any ghosts or witches round, they are just as likely to come in the daytime as the night.”

Polly prided herself in feeling a great contempt for Brown Beck's hobgoblins, but somehow, after that, whenever she went to her room, she felt in a new hurry to get down stairs again.

There was only one thing in the near future to which she looked forward with pleasant anticipation, and that was the visit to Cousin Keziah's. It was in vain, she knew, to ask her aunt to allow her to walk over to Miss Hapgood's house; but every day, as it came, however cold or stormy it might be, she used to look out, hoping it would prove the time when Cousin Keziah, or some messenger of hers, should arrive to take her away. Ox-sled or horse-sled or rough-built sleigh, whatever means of transportation, it would be equally welcome; but week after week went and nobody appeared.

One mild morning in February, Polly had the delightful privilege of going out for her aunt, to carry a pair of shoes to be mended;

for cobbling held a more important place in a shoemaker's business then than it does to-day. She skipped along, hurrying past the graveyard, where the white mist of a winter's thaw hung, phantom-like, over the black stones marked with skulls and cross-bones; she looked into the store, where Peter was mixing a bowl of toddy for a thirsty customer, who had brought in a large cake of yellow beeswax, to exchange as best he could, and stopped to caress the great tortoise-shell cat, that followed when she left the store. It was so pleasant to be out of doors, she was sorry when she reached the shoemaker's shop, a small frame-house covered with boards, and with a broken wooden doorstep. A half-starved looking colt was feeding on a wisp of hay outside, and all around the threshold the snow was colored blue, where the shoemaker's wife had emptied her indigo-pot, as if in confirmation of a little notice pinned outside the door, that she "didd all kindes of

dying." From within, as Polly's hand was on the latch, she heard loud sounds of profanity and anger; and as she opened it, half trembling, she saw a short, stout man, with a red, repulsive face, adding energy to his words by violently shaking his fist, and giving way to such a torrent of passion and coarse abuse, as, in all her innocent life, she had never heard before. "You dog, you!" he raved, "I'll break every bone in your body! I'll flog the life out of you! I'll —" But, seeing Polly, he abruptly checked himself, and, with a conscious air, snatched up his hat and went out of the house by a back entrance.

Polly grew white as the ghosts she feared: "It was so very dreadful!"

It was the same tall lad that she had seen at meeting in the tow frock, who seemed to have been the object of this outburst of rage. He was seated on a high bench, sewing a pair of shoes with white camlet tops wrought in red and green silk, and, though flushed with

indignation, was by no means as excited as Polly was. She, poor child, was quivering, and quite forgot her errand at the first.

“He won’t kill you, will he?” she asked, under her breath, looking up in the boy’s face, as she drew close to him.

“Kill me? No! he would have to lose me out of the shop if he did,” said the boy with a half-smile.

“But he frightened me so!” gasped Polly. “I’m afraid he will — for he said — he said — he’d flog you. O, can’t you get out and run away!”

“Words don’t hurt anybody,” was the boy’s reply; “and, as for blows, he used to flog me, but he won’t much more. I’m growing all the time, and I’m sixteen now. It was n’t anything this morning, only Madam Cram’s shoes don’t fit, and he need n’t be angry about that, for I told him, at the time, he’d given me the wrong last to make them on. I’m growing —” he repeated, half to himself, looking down at

his arm, which was bared for his work, and thinking how strong it was.

“And I hope you *will* grow! grow as strong as Samson!” said Polly, who was good to make others’ troubles her own; “and if I could do anything for you, I would be glad,” she said.

“Did n’t you come on any errand?” asked the boy; for Polly, absent-minded, had lost sight of her aunt’s message, and was starting off with her bundle.

Polly blushed at her forgetfulness, and, handing him the parcel, told him what to do. “It is for my aunt, Mrs. Philbrick; you know who she is?” she inquired.

“I know who her husband is,” the boy answered, with a certain unconscious bitterness of tone, that made Polly think of the silver spoons on her aunt’s table, and the handsome copy of “Paradise Lost.”

“Well, now!” said Brown Beck, when Polly reached home; “there’s been a woman here

to see about taking you to her house, and your aunt told her ‘she would n’t say about it some time, but that at present she was n’t willing you should go away anywhere.’”

“Not go anywhere!” said Polly, the iron entering into her soul, — “not go anywhere, when my father left word we should visit Cousin Keziah!” she repeated, sullenly, to herself, when she had taken off her bonnet and sat down in front of the fireplace to warm herself, feeling a gloomy satisfaction in the thought that she was really very much abused; and yet, when she remembered the glimpse of hard real life that she had had that morning, her own trials looked smaller and more trivial than she had ever regarded them before. But, from that time, Cousin Keziah’s home grew to be, in her fancy, a delightful Eden, doubly desirable because she felt herself shut out from it. To have Sunday come round and bring to her a sight of the tall woman in the brown cloak, and to receive from her a

bow and a smile, — for, after that first Sabbath, Miss Keziah never came in at noon so that she could speak to her, — and to watch and see if the tall lad with the sad eyes was at meeting safe and sound, were Polly's chief excitements.

Peter, meanwhile, was leading a very different life. His uncle, when he came, had no determined plan of breaking off his nephew's studies, but the times were such that he found it really difficult to procure suitable assistance in his store ; so, although Parson Piper, who was not only "learned in the Scriptures," but a Harvard graduate as well, and a good Greek, Latin, and Hebrew scholar, might at least have been solicited to give the boy instruction, as was common for ministers to do in those days, it was far easier and more profitable to make Peter of service in his own employ.

It was his place to deal out such liquors as were "drunk on the premises," and, when not thus engaged, to tend at the end of the coun-

ter, where tapes, bodkins, stay-lacings, combs, and such small wares were sold. It was not, in itself, hard work, but to a boy who had only just reached his fourteenth birthday, it was both a laborious and an unprofitable employment. The drinking of spirits was then the habit with all classes; yet he used to weary of seeing the dull-eyed toppers, who were his most frequent customers; and the women who came to make barter-trades with their tow-cloth and home-made flannels were often so hard to please, that, when night came, he was quite tired out. He used to look wistfully at the covers of his Virgil and his Latin grammar (a Latin grammar, indeed, without one explanatory, helpful English word in it), and wonder whether, after all, "he should ever be so happy as to go to college."

"If he only had Polly's quiet opportunity for study!" he thought; while to Polly, fretting over her loneliness, Peter's active life in the store seemed a source of constant delight.

"How many faces," she thought, "he must see! how much he must hear of all that is interesting around, and always learn first the fresh news from the war!" The weekly post-rider, when he came by, was sure to tarry at the store long enough, not only to distribute whatever letters and papers (and few and far between they were) which he might have to leave there, but also to report such rumors as he might have gathered by the way; for "post-haste" was with him by no means a descriptive term. The men who came in to trade, also, were sure to repeat whatever hearsay and often visionary accounts had reached them, of bloody battles that never were fought, and glorious victories that never were won. The tidings from Canada were so slow in coming, and so often contradictory, that they had almost lost their interest when they reached this quiet neighborhood, especially as few or none of the soldiers it had sent out had gone in that direction; but, in the movements of

the troops around Boston there was felt an almost breathless concern. Where will the end be? It was a question ever present. The dissatisfaction of the Continental troops, the difficulties of getting enlistments, the scarcity of "fewel" and ammunition, the inadequacy of many officers, and the insubordination of others, the hard labor on the frozen ground, — all these things were anxiously discussed every day by the different customers that came in.

Peter, at the store, knew of the presence of war by many other signs; salt was scarce and dear, window-glass was scarcely procurable, and rum, sugar, molasses, and spices of all kinds grew more and more costly. Solicitors came every little while, asking Mr. Philbrick to contribute towards buying blankets, tenting, clothes, and other necessities for the soldiers; for the public funds were insufficient for their needs, and the reluctant storekeeper, having once been an object of suspicion, felt compelled to give as often as requested. "How

long I shall have anything to give, is a question," he had said, on one such occasion, with a dreary thought of the December emission of paper-money, "issued in defence of American liberty." "How long will you have anything to give? I should think, from appearances, for some time," said blunt Parson Piper, who stood by, looking round, as he spoke, at the shelves of goods and the bins of grain and all the overflowing plenty of that country store. His eye, as he did so, rested upon Peter, who, not chancing at the moment to be busy, had taken up his Ainsworth's Dictionary, which, cut off as he was from most other books, he had taken with him to the store, to amuse himself, when not otherwise employed, in looking up odd words.

Parson Piper's eye kindled. "A younger person" with studious tastes was, in his mind, a sight worth seeing. "Well, my lad," he said, when he had looked at the book, "if you are as fond of learning as you seem to be,

come up to my house, and I shall be willing to show you some volumes, and to assist you somewhat in your studies, for, in times like these, there is no reason why education should be neglected. 'Get wisdom, get understanding,' it says in the Bible. Stirring times need men of mark. We have need enough of economy in the Colonies, but ignorance is the worst extravagance! We can't afford it; we can't afford it!" he repeated with emphasis. "We have too dull wits in New Hampshire; we ought to be thinking more of raising up scholars for our little college in the woods!" For, next to the success of the Colonial army, the welfare of the infant Dartmouth, in its forest cradle, seemed to him of most importance.

Peter's student's dream came back at the good preacher's words, and he thanked him as warmly as he dared, for a minister was, in his thought, a very great and superior being; but just then his uncle, standing by, sent him

out on an errand, and by some strange chance it happened that, whenever after the minister came into the store, there was always something his uncle wished him to be doing which would take him away from it.

One bright morning in the last of March, Polly was in the kitchen, where Brown Beck was boiling maple-sap in the great kettle hung over the fire. Everybody was trying to make maple-sugar that year, when West India molasses and sugar were luxuries only to be dreamed of. Far down the street she heard the beating of a drum. It grew louder and louder! there surely was news from the war! Even Aunt Nancy was aroused, and told Polly she might go out and find what was going on, when Peter rushed in, all glowing with animation: "Howe has evacuated Boston, and our troops are free to enter there!"

That very night, one arm around her and Peter beside him, her father was with Polly once more. He looked worn and tired, as

well he might, after the dreary winter, but he was happy in a little furlough, which, by the long ride, pressing his way over the rough and sometimes flooded roads of spring, he had contrived to spend with his children. A joyful reunion, but how brief it must be! for he could tarry but two days at most, and then must be off again, to join that portion of the army which was to follow Washington wherever he might lead, probably to New York.





CHAPTER VII.

TWO more busy days are seldom passed than were those of Dr. Austin's flying furlough.

A crowd of village people thronged around, wherever he went, anxious to hear the latest news, and plying him with a thousand questions. The newspapers of the day were so few, small, expensive, and unsatisfactory, that a man who had been an eye-witness of any event of public interest possessed an importance hard to appreciate at the present time. Fathers and mothers, who had sons whom they had not heard from since their departure for the army, came, hoping that in some way it might have happened that he could tell

them of their welfare. Parson Piper hurried in, impatient to learn how the late action of the New Hampshire Convention was regarded by military men ; Mr. Burbean, hearing of his arrival, jogged over on his old horse, to ascertain "if things looked any less dark." Polly plead for him to recount all he knew of the sufferings and the courage of her "favorite Arnold" at the north, and fairly wept over the tidings of the death of the beloved Montgomery ; while Aunt Nancy begged to know "if Washington were not extravagant ; if he really had a French cook ; and if Lady Washington's clothes were not unduly fine for a patriot's wife." For, since she had felt compelled to wear only homespun herself, she had grown severe in her judgment of all display in others, though still as fond, in her heart, of elegant adornings as she had been in her gayest days.

But, while making himself hoarse in talking of army matters, Dr. Austin's thought was,

all the while, busy, pondering what he should do with his children. Peter and Polly, who had been educated to regard the decision of their elders with submission, and who shrank from coming to their father with their discontents, made no complaints ; yet as, on asking Peter "what progress he had made in his studies," Dr. Austin found that he had been too busy in his uncle's store to give them any attention, and as Polly, whose midnight vigils in the haunted bedroom, and whose close confinement, all day in the house, told so plainly on her appearance, that she looked more like a young spectre than a blooming girl, and sadly down-hearted as well, he began to feel dissatisfied himself, and to wish he could find some other place for them both. The more he thought of the matter, the more indignant he became, especially in regard to Peter ; for he had sent, with the children, explicit directions regarding his education, and had forwarded, besides, a considerable sum of money

in silver, which he thought would be more than sufficient to pay all expenses for a considerable time. Mr. Philbrick's conduct, under these circumstances, seemed to him not only a selfish and unwise course toward Peter, but a breach of faith as regarded himself, and he felt little inclined to continue in the keeping of his brother-in-law the charge he had intrusted to him.

As for his sister, since she left her father's house, a bride, in whose beauty he felt a conscious pride, child though he was, he had seen her but a few brief times, when, still handsome, well dressed, prosperous, and chancing to allude only to subjects on which they were agreed, he had seen nothing in her to criticise. Now, for the first time, he realized that she was lacking in that tenderness of feeling and that candor of judgment so essential to making her a gentle companion or a wise adviser for young people. To take his children again to Massachusetts, had it been desirable, would

now have been almost an impossibility ; and when Polly besought of him (the only request she made) that he would arrange with her Aunt Nancy for her to be allowed to visit Cousin Keziah, it seemed to open the only possible way out of his difficulties. To be sure, he realized, when, a few hours later, he took his horse and rode over to Miss Hapgood's house alone, that it was a very rough and common place, where hard work had filled so much of the time that there was little space left for those small refinements of life that add so much to its beauty and its pleasure ; that the neighbors round were uneducated, hard-handed toilers for their daily bread ; that his children, if placed there, would be shut out from most that the world calls best ; and yet, when he rode back, he had decided, with Miss Hapgood's consent, that at least for the summer they should both be put at board with her : Peter to be taught to assist, as he could, every day, in light labor

about the farm, and once or twice each week to recite to Parson Piper, with whom Dr. Austin soon made arrangements for his son's instruction ; and Polly to be made familiar with knitting, sewing, and household duties. "At Cousin Keziah's," thought Dr. Austin, "if Peter rarely even sees a man of quality and culture, and if Polly fails to learn to make a graceful courtesy, or entertain a polished beau with ease, and has none of the studied prettinesses that make her sex so charming in modish society, they will, at least, be taught to speak the honest truth, to be patient and pure-hearted and brave and self-reliant, and will be rich in virtues, if time should make them poor in purse."

"Well," said Aunt Nancy, when, as adroitly as he was able, her brother informed her that, since she had been burdened with the care of his children for some time, he was now intending to place them, for a season, with his wife's cousin, Miss Hapgood, — "well, every one to

his tastes ; but," she added with some asperity, "I must say, Brother Peter, yours are exceeding singular, and as for Keziah Hapgood, she may in the first have had some birth and breeding, but she has thrown herself away for people who are neither kith nor kin to her."

"Well, Nancy," returned her brother, "better give our lives away to others than waste them on ourselves ; otherwise, why worship as we do that Life which was wholly sacrifice ?"

"That 's no reason for Keziah's doing as she does," said his sister, contemptuously, and with a shade of anger in her tone, for she was unaccustomed to having others dissent from her opinions. "As for your putting Polly with her, after you have said you would like to have her learn to behave as a high-bred, genteel young woman in society should do, it is something I wash my hands of. I was n't for having her visit them at all."

Miss Hapgood had, in her childhood, be-

longed to a substantial family in Haverhill, Massachusetts, at whose home Polly's mother, a fair young orphan, was a frequent guest ; but, on her parents' death, the affections of Keziah settled on a sister, the last of the household except herself, a pretty and impulsive girl, who, at the age of sixteen, made a somewhat venturous marriage with a young man whose only property consisted of some wild lands in New Hampshire. Keziah could not bear the thought of leaving the child-wife to meet, unshared by her, the hardships of a settler's life ; so, gathering together what she judged would be of most service, and putting a sad-iron, two candlesticks, a silver teapot, — brought by her grandmother from England, — and a small brass kettle in the saddle-bags with her clothes, and, woman-like, hiding, in the bosom of her gown, six daffodil bulbs and a packet of balsam and sweet-william seeds, she had bidden friends and familiar scenes farewell, and, mounted on her stout

gray mare, had followed the young groom and bride, who rode in front of her, to their new home.

A perilous way it was, through the solemn woods, the spotted trees alone enabling them to keep in their path ; and a hard life awaited them in the rough log-house that, after a few weeks' delay at the crowded home of a settler, ten miles distant, was erected for them. Often, in the few years that followed, the howl of the hungry wolf was heard about their sheepfold, the black bears prowled about their fields of corn, and straggling Indians, mad with fire-water, thumped, at midnight, on their cabin door. Drought and flood and army-worm had spoiled their crops, and, last of all, sickness had entered their low door, and in a pine coffin, made by the husband's own hands, the young wife had been borne out, to sleep in peace beneath the tall oaks in the then newly made graveyard.

At first Keziah was compelled to stay to

care for her sister's infant, a puny little thing, that soon followed its mother ; but when the child had died she thought to leave, and might have done so, only, just as she had begun to make preparations to go, her brother-in-law had been killed by the falling of a tree which he was cutting, leaving, with no one to protect them, his old mother and a sister by no means firm in health, who had come to stay with him.

Keziah, always equal to emergencies, had then bought the place for herself, invited both mother and sister to live with her, and carried on affairs by her own right and in her own way, meeting, too, with much success ; for, as all who knew her said, "she had a shrewd head-piece, and her heart was as strong as her hands." New settlers had come in, and she now found herself the owner of a well-cultivated farm in a prosperous township. She had had a new house erected, which, for the time, was well furnished and comfortable. Her

apple-orchard of grafted fruit, Holland pippins and blue pearmain, belibonds and summer sweetings, was the marvel of the country round. She sent twenty miles, over the roughest of roads, to procure a linen foot-wheel, before they had come into general use ; and the sister of her brother-in-law, who lived with her, being a famous spinner and weaver, had filled for her great chests with the finest linen and the softest wool.

Like most women who have made their way in the world by their own sagacity, industry, and prudence, Miss Keziah was somewhat self-conscious of the fact. She was an ardent friend of liberty, was zealous for all moral reforms, and interested in all modern improvements, and was never afraid to advance her opinions, which, fortunately, were commonly expressed with wisdom and always with kindness.

Polly, when she began to pack her bag to leave her Aunt Nancy's, was surprised to find,

on looking over her clothes, that all her silk stockings, save that unlucky pair she had worn to ride in, were missing ; and where was the little blue-bordered handkerchief, and her best tucker with the lace edge ? And, worse than all, where was the little mourning-necklace that her father gave her at her mother's funeral ?

She did not quite dare to go with the account, as she should have done, to her Aunt Nancy ; for the thought of her nephew and niece being willing to leave her for Miss Hapgood had so irritated her somewhat uncertain temper, that she was doubly fault-finding. She did ask Beck, who said, " Well, there ! I never thought any good would come of your sleeping in that chamber over the graveyard ! "

A dreadful suspicion came to Polly. " Do you think, Peter," she asked, when she chanced to see him alone, " that it is possible that Beck can have been so wicked as to meddle with my

clothes?" And Peter had answered, "You don't know, Polly, anything about this world, if you have n't learned it's a very bad place. Why, it's quite monstrous, the way Uncle Abel waters his rum!"





CHAPTER VIII.

A COMFORTABLE, two-storied house, painted red, was Miss Keziah's, with a promise of more room on the outside than was fulfilled within, as the large central chimney took up space enough for one good-sized apartment, and only the rooms on the ground-floor were finished. But a pleasant, peaceful place it seemed to Polly, when she came to it as her new home, one bright morning in the last of April. In front, the fields sloped down toward the river-bank, where, on the interval lands, the flax was planted: on one side were cultivated fields; on the other was the orchard, and then a chestnut grove; while, in the rear, stretched back the "wood-lot," as

Miss Keziah called the large tract of primeval forest of which she was the owner. Bright in the little flower-bed, under the windows of the house looking southward, was a line of golden daffodils, just coming into bloom, children of those Miss Keziah had brought from her early home, and whispering to her of hope, and childhood, and "old Haverhill." A log-cabin, with only two rooms, to which she had come with her newly married sister, stood only a few rods away, now occupied by a man who helped cultivate her farm, and who, within three miles, was her only neighbor.

"Your only neighbor!" exclaimed Polly, in surprise, the day she came; for there was something in that quiet farm-house that took away the sense of loneliness.

Out in the kitchen the blaze in the broad fireplace was dancing and crackling around the little kettle that hung on the crane, giving out a delightful "woody" smell, and a short-cake was growing deliciously brown and crisp

in a great iron pan in front of the fire ; for it was just supper-time when Peter and Polly and their saddle-bags appeared at Miss Hapgood's door.

An old woman, dressed in butternut brown, and with two shawls pinned one over the other, sat, mild though the day was, in a low chair in the warmest corner of the hearth ; and a pale woman of about thirty, in a long checked "tyer" of blue and white, and a knot of "may-flowers" fastened in her bosom, was spinning on a large wheel that made a cheery, whirring sound, and went round as if it had a half-consciousness that it was doing service, and thought making woollen yarn the most delightful thing imaginable.

The table was already spread with rye bread and fresh butter, and some cold vegetables on a pewter platter that shone like silver, and furnished with plates and bowls turned (as the best wooden ware was) from the gnarled roots of the yellow ash, horn spoons,

and a charming little pitcher, doubtless from "old Haverhill," all roses without and maple sirup within. Polly noticed her wooden plates. She had never been accustomed to eating from anything but stone or pewter ware, save on fine occasions, when she had lost all thought of her food in her admiration of the pictures on her mother's and her Aunt Nancy's best china.

"Come, Judith," said Miss Keziah, turning to the pale spinner, "you have stood too long at the wheel already. If you have no judgment when to leave off, you must quit spinning altogether, for you are tired out."

The pale woman made no reply, only she smiled gently at Polly, and, putting away the soft white rolls in a flag basket, set noiselessly back the wheel in the corner of the room. A quiet creature, like a voiceless bird, she seemed to Polly, who wondered if she ever could understand what a restless person like herself endured; for Polly, like most "little

women" of fourteen, had a vivid idea of her troubles, and thought it probable few young people had ever suffered so much.

"This checkerberry has boiled!" said Miss Keziah, as she took the kettle from the fire, and proceeded to fill a little silver teapot, which was the only thing with any pretensions to splendor in the house. "Boil checkerberry-leaves, and all their virtue goes!"

"I am thinking," she began, when, having said grace standing, they were all seated at the table, and the old grandmother had been drawn up to it in her arm-chair, — "I am thinking, Judith, I mean to try first one thing and then another, of the green things growing this summer, and some time we shall hit on something as good, if not better, than the China tea. This is a great country, and everything discoverable ain't found out yet. We need n't be dependent on any other nation." Miss Keziah, like most women of character, had her hobbies, and, just then, her

“country’s greatness,” and her “country’s cause,” so filled her heart, that in all her household talk there was sure to be some allusion to the one or the other.

“I have forgotten how China tea tastes,” said Peter, “and I never drank checkerberry; but I have had enough of balm and sage and mountain-mint and sweet-fern and catnip.”

“I like them every one,” returned Miss Keziah; “there is a flavor of freedom in them all.”

“Freedom’s well enough,” put in old Mrs. Potter, Judith’s mother, who was apparently somewhat broken and childish, “but I’d give a good deal for a cup of old-fashioned tea, for all that! Now when Deliverance Hobbs and I were gals, and shet up in the garrison, the food was growin’ skurse, and the meat was gone; but Deliverance had a pound of tea of her own, and when the men were out watchin’ on the sentry-boxes for Injuns, we’d brew a cup, and it would stay our stomachs and cheer

our spirits, both in one. Your medder-grown stuff would n't do that, Keziah. And as for potatoes," she said, when Judith proceeded to help her to that portion of the boiled vegetables, "I did n't eat 'em when I was young, and I'm too old to begin now."

"But what should we do without them?" asked Keziah. "People are planting more ground with them every year. They are a sure crop, and a large one, and they do well on the new-burnt lands."

"We New Hampshire people ought to be grateful to the Derry weavers for two things," said Judith; "for giving us potatoes to eat, and for teaching us how to use the linen foot-wheel. It's a good deal the Scotch Irish have done for us."

It was the longest sentence that Polly had heard her speak, and she noticed that her voice was feeble.

Just then there was a tap at the side door, and Polly glanced up as Miss Keziah rose to

open it. There stood her old friend, the shoemaker's apprentice, in a checked tow frock, drawn around him with a leather belt, a big and battered cocked hat, which evidently had known some former owner, on his head, and his arms full of sassafras branches, which he had brought as a tribute to Miss Keziah.

"Come in, Rob; come in, and have some supper," said Miss Hapgood; but the boy, seeing less familiar faces than her own, drew back, bashful and blushing.

"But you must," said Miss Keziah, laying her hand on his shoulder like one accustomed to control. "Come in, and tell us how you are getting on."

"O, as usual," answered the boy in a low tone; and Polly looked at him with a pity she could not express, for "what a dreary thing," she thought, "his 'usual' life must be!"

Miss Keziah would not take "No." She brought another bowl and plate, and quite forced the shy boy, who had come in and sat

down on one end of the long settle at the side of the room, to take his place with them at the table. "You shall have one quiet supper, at least," she said.

"I have had a pleasant day, to-day," said Rob, "walking through the woods. He let me carry Mr. Burbean's shoes home, as, indeed, he ought, for the man had been for them seven times, and he would neither cut the uppers himself, or let me do it; but, on the way, I saw some sassafras, and thought you might like some."

"You are in a hard place, Rob!" said Miss Keziah, thoughtfully, as if she were trying to solve a problem in her mind.

"But as long as I am a 'prentice I won't complain," said Rob; "he's my master till I am free."

"And you are growing now!" put in Polly, ready to speak, and remembering his own words of self-consolation.

Peter looked at her with reproving eyes; it

seemed a very pert speech for his sister to be making to a stranger ; but the boy glanced up with a smile that seemed foreign to his earnest, serious face.

“ Miss Keziah,” he said, at last, — and Polly noticed that he was too preoccupied to more than taste the food on his bountifully filled plate, — “ I want to ask you, — what do you think ? does one man have as good a right to his freedom as another, as people are saying now ? ”

“ Of course I do,” answered Miss Keziah. “ Is n’t that what we are fighting for ? ”

The boy said nothing more, but, sitting quietly, like one accustomed to keeping his thoughts to himself, “ Yes, madam,” and “ No, madam,” he replied to the questions asked him, and, when supper was over, he left immediately.

“ A hard life he has, a hard life,” repeated Miss Keziah to Peter and Polly, as she watched him while he took the shortest way to reach

the village, through the fields and pastures. "He is one of the best and kindest lads in the world, but to-day he is down-hearted. Perhaps it was seeing you young folks with better advantages than himself, for rough days he must have with shoemaker Dow, who cares for nothing but drinking-bouts and wrestling-matches, and has always had the name of being a cruel master with his 'prentices. Rob clings to me, for he knows I was a friend to his mother," she added. "She and his father had known better days, but anxiety and poverty and disappointment wore them both out at last!"

"O, yes! I believe—I am quite sure—I have heard their story," exclaimed Polly, all alive with interest; "and," she continued, with a sentimental air, "don't you think this 'Rob,' as you call him, has a way as if he were born for better things? A sad look, as if he were a prince who had been shut up in a dungeon, and yet a proud, daring one, as though

he might make a great hero, noble and brave, like Benedict Arnold ? ”

“ He is a truthful, well-meaning young fellow,” said Miss Keziah. “ He makes a better shoe now than his master does, and, considering what he has been through, he has done well.”

Polly breathed, that summer, in deed and truth, the air of freedom. Miss Keziah had the entire control of the farm and all its belongings ; for Job Hart, the new hired man (her former well-trained one having gone to the war), was only a feeble instrument in her hands ; and she was so very busy, body and soul, that she had little time for the close supervision of such apparently correct young people as Peter and Polly. “ And I’ve been thinking,” she said, by way of self-excuse, “ that there may be such a thing as holding in young folks a little too close ; a colt won’t do the better for being always kept tied with a halter.”

“ Tied with a halter ” Polly certainly was not. Over hill and dale, through wood and

glen, by meadow-pool and singing brook, startling the ground-bird from her fern-hid nest, peering into the shady thicket, where the catbird brooded on her emerald eggs, chasing the orange butterflies, and twining wreaths of violets and pale wood-lilies, she wandered at her will, only hedged in by the fear of losing her way, and the dread of the gray wolves and the brown bears, that still now and then, though not frequently, were seen.

“And I guess, if you once had had a mountain-cat’s teeth in you, you would not be quite so daring !” said Peter, who sometimes wearied of his sister’s importunities for him to accompany her upon her rambles.

But O, they were so fair, the great primeval woods, the fresh, new-broken fields, where the sun shone, and the birds sang,—how could she stay within ? She used to wonder at the quiet Judith, who seemed never to care to cross the threshold, save to go to the meeting

on Sunday, and to watch the growth of the ragged pinks, and marigolds, and lady's-delights, in the little flower-bed nestled under one of the windows ; but always, when she was not ill, was busy at the great wool or the linen wheel, or carding tow or wool on the hand-cards, or knitting, or weaving at the loom set up in one end of the long kitchen.

“A dull life she leads, with no one to talk to, when we are out, but her old mother,” thought Polly, who took more pleasure in the company of the lively, outspoken Miss Keziah, who, like herself, was always ready to find some excuse for being out of doors. She often accompanied her in her rides about the farm, sometimes sitting behind her on the old gray horse, sometimes mounted in the cart drawn by an immense pair of oxen, — the same kind of cattle which Captain John Mason brought over in 1633, “to stock the plantations and assist in drawing lumber” ; big, yellow, intelligent creatures, that were counted marvels even

then, when large, strong oxen held the same comparative place that thorough-bred horses do to-day.

Miss Keziah was a wise woman in sickness. For years she was the only "cure-all" the little community round her knew, and now, when any of her old acquaintance were taken ill, they were sure to send for her to come to them. All her prescriptions were of roots or herbs, but her gifts of healing were quite as great as the village doctor's, who, in truth, physicked and bled his patients most unmercifully. Under her instructions, Polly grew rich in woodland lore, and seldom came back to the house without having her arms full of boughs and herbs, and roots and flowers, which, whatever they were, the good doctress without a title always assured her were of almost priceless worth in some form of disease. Witch-hazel branches and jewel-weeds, wild-currants from the swamp and white-balm from the sunny hills, gold-thread roots and violet flow-

ers, Indian-turnips and Solomon's-seals, all alike were precious to Cousin Keziah.

What sweet odors came, at night, to Polly, as she lay in her little unfinished chamber, that opened into a wide waste-room, with floor of loosely laid boards, where these woodland stores were dried and kept!

Somehow, her old fears all vanished in that little room; Cousin Keziah's cheery, sustaining presence in the house, and the gentle smile of the calm, patient Judith, had put them all to flight!

A small, ill-lighted room it was, with an uncurtained bed, corded with elm-bark, a common substitute for hemp in cording beds in those days, and with a stout little feather-bed, which Miss Keziah had made from the feathers of many kinds of birds, which had been caught about her premises, in the various traps and snares then in frequent use for procuring game, or destroying the winged robbers of the hen-roosts and poultry-yards. "There is noth-

ing a new settler needs so much as a saving disposition," said Miss Hapgood ; and, accordingly, hawks' feathers and pigeons', the snow from the owl's breast and sable from the crow's neck, the wood-duck's dainty dress and the shy partridge's speckled plumage, all alike had gone to fill the coarse tow sacking that covered them. Lying on that little bed, whose sheets and "pillow-beeres" smelt of lavender and sweet-grass, Polly forgot all her witch terrors, and dreamed only the happy visions of innocence and health.

It was a warm midsummer morning, scarcely nine o'clock, and yet the dew was dry upon the grass. Outside the door, in the shade of a great red-oak, Miss Keziah, Judith, Polly, even old Mrs. Potter herself, were sitting, picking wool, for it was after the sheep-shearing, and a "monstrous busy time," Keziah said. It was not very pleasant work, handling the soiled fleeces, and pulling from them the sticks and burs ; but Polly entered into it

with a will, for it was easy enough, and she was ready to assist whenever she could do so.

All four of the women were dressed alike, in long blue "tyers," that covered them from neck to heels ; and Mrs. Job Hart, the wife of the hired man, had come over "to assist," as she said, bringing in her arms a very fretful baby, with a grimy cap.

"This wool," said Polly, beginning at last to grow impatient, "is quite full of those abominable, worthless burdock-burs !"

"Worthless ? O, no !" exclaimed Miss Keziah ; "their seeds are the best thing in the world for a weak stomach."

"Yes," put in Mrs. Potter, "as long ago as I was a gal in the garrison, there was a woman there that was ailing, and —"

"There's Peter, coming back through the meadow, tearing along like mad !—there's something happened !" burst forth Polly ; for, an hour before, Peter had started to go to

Parson Piper's, it being one of his recitation-days.

"The old mare must be stuck in the bog, — Oh!" cried Miss Keziah, starting up; for former trials had made this vision a constant terror to her.

"And she won't get out, this time, I'm thinking," said Judith.

"And just as I had learned to ride bare-back," moaned Polly; "it's too bad!"

"There's news! There's news!" shouted Peter, hoarsely, hurrying so fast that, when he reached them, he dropped down in their midst, too much out of breath to speak.

"The mare?" asked Keziah.

"The Gen-eral Con-gress," gasped Peter. "They've drawn up a paper — and signed it, and we ain't under King George, or Great Britain, any more. We're 'free and independent States,' and we're going to fight for ourselves!"

"Thank the Lord!" said Miss Keziah.

“And the men who did it, too,” suggested Polly.

“No, no,” returned the other, who was no man-worshipper, “they were only poor creatures, doing His bidding ; to him be all the glory ! But there is one thing,” she declared, “there sha’n’t be any more work done to-day.”

“But it is a pity not,” expostulated Judith. “Tabby Burbean said she would come over with her cards, and help us, as soon as the wool could be got ready.”

“Tabby Burbean or not,” said Keziah, “no more work shall be done to-day !” And, as she spoke, she laid hold of the big basket of wool with both hands, to carry it away ; “such news as this ain’t heard more’n once in a hundred years ; it isn’t the time to work, more’n on Sunday. I am going to get ready and go over to the village ; perhaps I shall hear more.”

“And I too !” exclaimed Polly ; “and I will

wear my best clothes ; I'm sure I have nothing good enough to put on. — Did you know," she said, snatching up the Hart baby in its grimy cap,—"did you know there was n't any old king over you any more !" At which the baby, startled by her unmaternal manner of tossing up, sent forth such a doleful cry, that Polly dropped him in his mother's arms, and pulled off, in a trice, her long-sleeved "tyer," as her first preparation for honoring the day.

How bright she looked, as she started for the village, with Miss Keziah, Peter, Mrs. Hart, and the baby, all in the ox-cart together ! Her eyes shone, and her ear-rings trembled, and she was decked with all the finery she possessed ; for Miss Keziah was as indulgent in regard to her dress as her Aunt Nancy had been strict. "Wear out your foreign rigs and have some good plain homespun ones," she had advised ; but Polly had a prudent regard for the welfare of her best clothes, and seldom donned them, save on Sundays.

Mrs. Hart, too, had put a pair of patched shoes on her stockingless red feet, and the baby shone forth with a washed face and a clean cap. "I tried to make myself look kind o' decent," she said, "though what I'm goin' for, I don't know. The 'Gineral Congress,' as you call it, and King George, it's all one to me ; but I guess Job knows sumthin' about it. Leastways, he said, 'Go with 'em, Susanna.' But there ! if I can get the garden hoed, and sumthin' to eat, and enough cloth made for Job a coat and breeches, and some stockings knit, so our feet won't freeze next winter, it will be all the independence I want, seems if !"

Polly shrugged her pretty shoulders, under her gay pink and yellow flowered neckerchief. A woman with no more patriotism seemed to her unworthy to live at such a time ; and a mother who would let her infant be seen, even at home, with a dirty face and a grimy cap was even lower in the scale

of existence. "Really, old Buck and Bright were almost her equals," she thought. She got down from the cart, and, as she walked, she gathered wild grape-vine, and the great rosy blossoms of the red mulberry, and, weaving long garlands, hung them about their necks, like triumphal wreaths. "Hurrah! old Buck and Bright!" called Peter as she did so. "You'll never draw any of the king's lumber any more!"

"And the great pines!" said Keziah, pointing to two towering forest sentinels, with "G. R." cut upon them; "the king's mark will never be put upon another!"

When they reached the village, they found it all alive with excitement. The narrow street was full of people. "Uncle Abel's store is shut up!" said Peter. The tavern was deserted, the dwelling-houses closed. Mr. Philbrick and his wife were coming down the long path that led to their house. Peter and Polly, who had dismounted from the cart, and

were walking, stopped to speak to them. "The 'Declaration' has come, and Parson Piper is going to read it in front of the meeting-house," said Aunt Nancy, casting her eyes over Polly's clothes, with a half-scornful, half-reproachful expression.

"And I, for one, am glad of it," said Mr. Burbean, who had joined them. "Things look dark, but it is a little comfort to know where we stand. We hain't seemed to belong anywhere for some time."

"That is true," responded Mr. Philbrick; "a man begins to know where he is, but whether things will be any better than they have been remains to be seen. It's a hard thing to carry on a war with a nation like Great Britain, and be as poor as this country is. We can't tell," he continued, with anxiety in his tone. His business perplexities already wore upon his looks, though, after all, he was not without hope in a new quarter, having invested somewhat largely with a company

in an enterprise for the manufacture of saltpetre, so necessary in time of war. "Now we are in for the contest, we must fight it through," he said.

Into the green space around the meeting-house every one was pressing, men, women, and children, — and what a brood of children there were ! Bareheaded, their sunburnt hair flying about their faces, brown with tan or yellow with freckles, with coarse tow frocks and uncovered feet, but singularly quiet and docile. Parson Piper was all awake ; his eyes gleamed like stars ; his face glowed like flame ; he carried his head, with its snow-white wig, with an air of triumph ; he moved among his flock with a word for each, and every one made him obeisance on beholding him. "This is a time that will come back to you when you are an old man," he said, patting on the head little Jabez Burbean, a stout child with a great piece of short-cake.

"Ah, Miss Hapgood !" he asked, when he

came on Cousin Keziah, "don't you see how Scripture's coming true, — 'A nation shall be born in a day'? And what a day it is!"

Not till all had gathered together, and he had offered thanks, did he read the "Declaration," which from the nearest shire-town an express-post had brought, at almost break-neck speed.

How gloriously they sounded, when for the first time those words were heard: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Scripture-taught Miss Keziah, as she listened, thought of Miriam's song of victory and Deborah's exultations. Whatever were her present trials, whatever conflicts lay before her, she felt our land had indeed "triumphed gloriously," since Freedom's voice had here found so full and clear an utterance.

When the reading was finished, Polly noticed the men consulting amongst themselves. "The town-powder!" said one; "The town-powder!" returned another, "just to make a noise, when every grain may be needed to fight with!"

A tall boy with dark hair came rushing up the street with a stout pole in his hand, followed by half a dozen others similarly equipped. Across the street, with a field between, rose an abrupt hill, so steep that it was hard to clamber up its ledgy side. Polly saw that the leader was Rob Millin, whom she had seen at the shoemaker's window as she came past, busily stitching, though every one else seemed out of doors; but even he had broken loose at last. He led the way, and up the sloping field, up the rocky hillside, clutching at the bushes and saplings to hold on, the others pressed close after. Polly watched them, wondering what they were about. By and by she lost sight of them, and presently half a dozen

other lads, all with iron bars or poles, were seen climbing the hill in another place.

There was a little delay, and then, crash! Breaking the bushes, snapping the young ash-trees, loosening the smaller rocks and stones, a giant boulder came rushing down the steep hill! Faster and faster, gathering force, it plunged along. Every eye was on it. "So fall our country's enemies!" said Parson Piper.

Long after it reached the bottom of the hill, it rolled forward by its own force, but at last, in the green field, just opposite the place of worship, it ceased to move. "There let it remain, a monument forever!" said Parson Piper; and loud hurrahs rang on the air, from the crowd lingering around the meeting-house.

"Come, Polly," said Miss Keziah, when this exploit was over, and she had had a word with her numerous acquaintances, — "come, Polly; it is time we were going." And Polly, with re-

luctant face, gave her assent. Mrs. Hart and the crying baby were already in the ox-cart when they reached it, but Peter was among the missing. They found him, at last, by the tavern, where all the boys had gathered, to look at poor George the Third hanging ignominiously, with his head downward, as he swung from the high sign-post ; while, on an open space near by, they were collecting together candle-wood and brush, in large quantities, to make, when evening came, a magnificent illumination. "A splendid spectacle," Polly thought, "which she must return to the farm, and leave entirely unseen !"

"And to-morrow night," said Peter, pulling away a half-withered garland from the neck of one of the yellow oxen, "there is to be a grand dance at the tavern."

"O, let us go !" cried Polly ; "may we not, Cousin Keziah ?"

"You can't dance," said Peter.

"O, but I can," said Polly ; "I know by the

feeling in my feet when I hear the music ; I could dance, just as a robin sings or a swallow flies."

"And queer dancing it would be," said Peter ; "but if you could, you are not invited."

"And you are too young to go if you were," said Cousin Keziah. "They are getting too lax here about times and seasons, and it won't anyways do for young folks like you to be out after nine o'clock. The last ball I went to was when Parson Piper was ordained. All the ministers from the country round were in town. Old Parson Swan preached in the afternoon, on the final judgment, a fearful, solemn sermon, and in the evening there was a ball that was a ball. Parson Piper opened it with prayer, and your Aunt Philbrick was there, in a pink and white brocade, and her husband in a blue satin waistcoat wrought all over with green and scarlet vines and flowers."

"O, how lovely! how lovely it must have

been !” sighed Polly. “ But *I* never can see anything ! O dear !” From what ecstatic pleasures she was shut out ! she thought, as she rode home in the jolting old ox-cart.

Peter had been permitted to spend the night at Parson Piper’s, and go and see the great bonfire. It was hard that, at least, that privilege did not fall to her lot. She wished her Aunt Nancy would have asked her to spend the night at her house. She would almost have slept in the ghost-chamber, if she could have had a glimpse of the festal illuminations beforehand. Miss Keziah was too much absorbed by the real issue of the words she had heard, to mind the sulky face of the little girl, and the Hart baby, worn out by its travels, was crying lustily in its mother’s arm.

“ Let me down,” cried Polly, speaking to Job Hart, who was walking beside the oxen, — “ let me down ; I had rather walk.”

The sky above was rosy with the sunset ; the soft wind sang in the boughs ; great spotted

field-lilies nodded here and there beside the path ; the air was sweet with the breath of clover-bloom and elder ; and the bobolinks sang their merriest, down in the meadow, where the brook flowed quietly, bordered with white-blossomed weeds ; but Polly "cared for none of these things." Since she could have no share in enjoying the fire-works and merrymakings, what was all the loveliness of nature to her ? She snapped off the pretty yellow lilies impatiently, and broke the great elder-clusters and threw them away to wither.

By and by she heard steps behind her, and, looking up, saw her old friend, Rob Millin. He seemed sad and tired, and, for the first time, it struck Polly that her discontent was selfishness.

"Good day to you," said the boy, respectfully.

"Good day to *you*," returned Polly. "I saw you out helping roll down the rock, and I was so glad that the shoemaker let you go free

from your work, and that you could help celebrate."

"I free?" answered the other. "I stole the time, and a fool I was to do it, for what's freedom to me? I'm nothing but a slave myself."

"O, yes you are! or, if you have been, you won't be long," was Polly's comforting rejoinder. "But what will the man that has the shop say to you? He can be so dreadful when he is angry!"

"I don't know what he *will* say," answered the boy, gloomily; "I've seen him; I know what he *has* said. But I will never stand quietly and let him strike me again; he may kill me first — he — may —"

The color fled from Polly's face. The boy saw it, and reproached himself. "Don't be troubled," he said, "I'm sorry I spoke to you about it. He has been drinking, and has lost money on two Scotch-Irish men that were here and had a wrestling-match, and to-mor-

row morning he will be in a better mood, and people will be coming to the shop, and I shall get clear ; but, just to-night, I would rather not meet him. He's threatened me ; it ain't the place of a 'prentice to strike back if he's struck ; and, if it were, he's older than I am, and stronger. But don't think of it any more," he said ; " I ain't worth it, and 't will all come right."

" But where are you going to stay to-night ? " said Polly ; " O dear ! "

" Stay ? " answered the boy. " Is n't the sky big enough to cover me ? and who needs any closer roof, such weather as this ? "

" But the wolves ! I should be *so* afraid to be out all night ! " said Polly ; " and these hemlock woods, — they look so black and frightful ! "

" As for the wolves, " answered the boy, " I have some tinder and a flint-box with me ; I can strike a fire if I hear them howl ; but wolves are not the worst things in the world.

If there were more of them I should know better what to do. Jack Crullis, — he's half Indian, you know, — he taught me how to bait them with mackerel-hooks, and how to make wolf-traps out of logs, as the Indians do ; and one night I killed two wolves, and if I could have had the money for their heads, as I ought, they would have brought me as much as twenty shillings."

"And did n't you get it?" asked Polly.

"Get it! Ask Master Dow who had the pay for them!" said the boy, his cheek flushing at the memory of his old grievance; "I had n't used much of *his* time setting the traps; I did it when I should have been abed and asleep; this is not the first night I have spent in the woods, because his house has been too hot to hold me! But the wolves were caught, and I'd cut off their heads, and hoped to get the bounty on them. But what's this to you?" he asked, interrupting himself; "I won't trouble you any more."

“But you must; I want to know,” said Polly; “what was it?”

“O, I put them away, both heads, in an old basket Jack Crullis gave me, and when I went to get them to carry for the bounty, they were both gone, and a marten’s skin that I had put with them, — that was gone too, — and two days after some one was telling how Master Dow had killed two wolves and got the prize on their heads.”

“O, that was too bad!” sighed Polly.

“But I sold their skins,” said Rob, “and got something for them. If I could set some more traps, and have good luck, I should be glad, for there’s a high bounty on wolves, and there are some things I want to get.”

“What things?” said Polly, her curiosity getting the better of her politeness.

The boy hesitated.

“I am sorry I asked; I forgot all my manners,” apologized Polly.

“I want a musket most of anything,” said the boy.

“A musket!” repeated Polly. “You have no time to go hunting, if you had one, and powder is so monstrous scarce and dear, besides!”

“I know it,” returned Rob; “but I want a musket, for all that, and I ought to have one by the law, and a bayonet and a cartridge-box, a pound of powder, twenty bullets, and twelve flints; the law would give them to me, for I am over sixteen; but I don’t have them, and I sha’ n’t without I earn them, and I mean to do it.”

“But what do you want of them without you can use them? That is what puzzles me,” said Polly.

The boy smiled. “You think I had better save my money and buy a hat?” he asked, taking off his battered head-piece. “Well, it is no time I have to earn money now; so it does n’t matter.”

“But I can’t bear,” said Polly, “to have you stay out over night in the woods. If you will come home with me, my Cousin Keziah will

give you a good supper and a good place to sleep in ; I know she will."

"I know she would, too," said Rob ; "she is the best friend, she is the only friend I have in the world ; but I want to trouble no one, and I am not afraid !"

"Cousin Keziah may be your best friend, but she is not your only one," returned Polly, a little piqued ; "I'm sure I always wished you well, ever since the first Sunday I saw you at meeting and the tithing-man was so unjust."

"And I've wished you well, too," responded Rob. "Do you suppose I shall ever forget how kindly you spoke to me when you came out of meeting there with Miss Hapgood ?"

"But I can't be happy all night," said Polly. "I shall think about you and the wolves and the bears."

"And I," said the boy, "shall be asleep in some quiet place, or else I shall sit in the moonlight, and work on this." And he touched,

as he spoke, a cow's horn, which, partly fashioned for use, he had in his hand.

"You're making a powder-horn to go with your musket," said Polly.

"Hush, there's some one coming!" whispered the boy. And darting into the deep wood, in a moment he was out of sight.

It was Price Hodgkins, on horseback. "Polly!" he called, — for, from being a relation of her Uncle Philbrick, he was accustomed to seeing her and addressing her by name, — "Polly, has your uncle's maid, Beck, been seen up this way?"

"No, sir, not that I know," answered Polly; "why should she have been?"

"She's missing," was the answer, "and a good many things are missing with her; all Mrs. Philbrick's teaspoons and her silver teapot, and candlesticks, and some Spanish doubloons your uncle had in a bag in a little chest in his bedroom, and likely they will find more things gone as soon as they can look round";

saying which, he struck his horse and hurried along.

“Poor Rob!” said Miss Keziah, when Polly came in with the pitiful account of her walk. “It says, in this new ‘Declaration,’ that ‘all men are created equal,’ but some folks are born to pretty hard lots, for all that; but if quick wits and a kind heart are counted in, Rob need not stand second to any one.”

“I can’t sleep!” said Polly, “I know, to-night, for fear the wolves will eat him; and about Aunt Nancy’s teaspoons, you don’t know how solemn it seems, somehow, Cousin Keziah!”





CHAPTER IX.

WHAT a winter it was, the gloomy season of 1776 and 1777!

Others than Mr. Burbean looked out with dreary forebodings of "hard times coming." Some, indeed, by the presence of the wolf at the door, knew they were already here.

Poor Mr. Philbrick, mourning over his vanished doubloons, was kept in constant irritation by the sight of some debtor, too ready to pay, presenting himself with his hands full of bills of credit, to refuse which was to have the whole debt cancelled; and yet to accept, unless to be used in the same way, was to him nearly as trying and unprofitable.

Aunt Nancy, scouring her own pots and

pans in place of the lost Beck, whose whereabouts were not to be found, and looking at the brass candlesticks which took the place of her silver ones, grew more and more gloomy and dissatisfied, and showed no desire to invite back to her home her restless young niece, who when with her had been some care and little assistance, or to undertake again providing three meals a day for "a growing boy" like Peter. It was not an easy thing for Mrs. Philbrick to find a hired maid to stand in her slave-girl's place. The doctrine of freedom and equality was a new and popular one, and the farmers' daughters round, if willing to "work out," preferred to go as "help" into poor families than as servants into wealthier ones. Peter and Polly thus remained unmolested under the shelter of Miss Hapgood's farm-house. All was not cheerful prosperity even there. Some of the window-panes were broken, and glass to reset them was not to be procured. Peter, still struggling on with his

studies, found the necessary books were too "prodigious costly" things for him to even dream of possessing; and college life, now that he was so much nearer fit for it, seemed to be farther and farther away. Breadstuffs grew high and scarce, and salt to preserve the winter's stock of meat was quite wanting; the pigeons must be cured by smoking; the beef and pork must be packed down in snow, after the Indian fashion, and an outcry was made every time there was a melting season. Even the small quantity of salt used on the table seemed a precious thing; and Peter, whose task it had been to pound it, found his "occupation gone." Miss Keziah was busy half the time in devising and procuring substitutes for the various articles of constant use which the times had made costly or unattainable. She pounded fever-bush bark for spice, and prickly-ash for pepper, to add flavor to her dishes, while Judith carded the down from the silk-weed pods to make into candle-wicks, and saved every avail-

able "tag" of wool to put by toward making yarn or cloth, which, if not wanted for themselves, would be sure to be needed by the soldiers, to whom it was customary to forward supplies whenever the opportunity offered.

"Hard times" mean hard work. Peter and Polly began to realize that the price of freedom was not to be paid alone by the sacrifice of noble lives, but by daily acts of petty self-denial and patient submission to discomforts as well. Beyond, the aspect of the war was gloomy indeed. The retreat from New York had been followed by "terrible times" in "the Jerseys," and though the victories of Trenton and Princeton made the beginning of 1777 a "happy new year" for many a patriotic heart, the reduced state of the army, the prevailing sickness in it, and the increasing difficulty of obtaining recruits, made the prospect for the future exceedingly depressing.

In the two letters which the children had received since their father's return to the

army, though written in a spirit of cheerful trust, it was evident that he saw much to discourage him. Small-pox, dysentery, and malignant fever had raged among the soldiers, who were suffering for food, care, and medicine, and many of his fellow-surgeons were wholly unfit for their places: some basely selling furloughs and discharges at less than a shilling a man; others, well-meaning, but with no fit education for their position; while all alike were ill supplied with medicines and surgical instruments. The New Hampshire soldiers who in February returned to the little community brought back a sickening account of insubordination among the men in the army, and of lack of dignity and self-respect among its officers; but nothing for a moment could dampen Miss Keziah's ardor. "It's freedom's cause and the Lord's cause," she said, "and it will be sure to prosper. It was n't the lamps or the pitchers, it was the Lord's will, that brought down the walls of Jericho."

After the yellow leaves fell and the birds took flight in the autumn, Polly's life in the farm-house was dull enough. Peter found in Parson Piper an exceedingly appreciative teacher, who made him almost as much of a companion as a pupil, and with his books and lessons for friends, the studious boy was seldom lonely; but Polly, when the winter snows had come and the roads were blocked, so that Job Hart and the great yellow oxen had hard labor to break them out, often grew impatient for companionship. She made work a substitute for play, and learned to spin on big and little wheels, and even to weave quite skillfully for a beginner, with Judith for a teacher. Old Mrs. Potter, when in a garrulous mood, would entertain her with stories of her own young days when she lived in "a new settling" in the woods, where ten families used one frying-pan; or of the stirring time when she took refuge in the garrison-house, and helped load the gun while her young lover,

Israel Potter, fired at the besieging savages ; and how her eldest son, in the French war, went forth with Rogers's rangers, and returned, one of the few who came back, finding his way through the perilous, pathless woods, chewing the buds of trees and gnawing his knapsack-strap to keep himself from starving.

Sometimes the neighbors—that is, the people living within five miles of them—came in for a visit, and sometimes Polly went out herself with Miss Keziah to a quilting or a tea-drinking, in return. One happy time Rob Millin brought over some shoes for Judith, and as his master was away he ventured to spend the evening ; and Tabby Burbean was there helping spin, and Parson Piper's nephew had come to visit Peter ; so they had young folks enough for a merry-making ; and they parched corn, and roasted apples on the hearth, and told each other's fortunes with burning nuts ; and Job Hart came in with a borrowed fiddle, and Rob sang

“Yankee Doodle,” and Tabby Burbean, “My Love is lost to Me!” and when she did so, Polly saw Judith go to the window and wipe her eyes; and then they played games, blind-man’s-buff and twirl-the-trencher, and Polly, making up for her past quiet, frisked round to her heart’s content, as gay as a bird on the wing; and even Rob forgot his trials for the time, only to have them come back to him looking blacker and bigger than ever when the clock struck nine, and he must return to his uncongenial home.

The sweet-smelling spring came back at last. The sap began to stir in the maples. “More work for us,” thought Polly, grown practical, with a sigh in her heart, over the labor of sugar-making. Then the bluebirds sang, the willows filled the air with fragrance, the may-flowers blossomed in the wood; and after that the violets made purple all the brooksides; and before they had quite withered, June had come, and the strawberries

were just beginning to grow ripe, when Polly, making haste to go out and gather the earliest, thought the world had never seemed so fair as it did that sweet summer morning ; for the robins sang their loudest, and the hemlock-boughs were fringed with softest green, and the river gleamed in the sunlight, like a golden stream, beyond the fields of budding flax. Polly fastened in her hair an opening bud of the wild rose, and was heaping her basket, scantily filled with berries, so few as yet were ripe, with the tender leaves of the new checkerberry, when she heard a rustling near her, and looked round, half startled. What strange, yet familiar person was this ? It was Rob, dressed in a complete suit of brown homespun, coarse, but not ill fitting, and showing to advantage his straight, slender figure, already beginning to have a strong and manly look. He carried a musket, and a knapsack was slung over his shoulder.

“Polly,” he said, in a low tone, for the first

time venturing to call her so, — “Polly, I’m up and away ; and if I never come back you must sometimes give me a thought, for it is often enough that I shall think of you and Miss Keziah and your brother, wherever I may be.”

“And where are you going to be?” asked Polly, who was apt to be prompt with her questions.

“My musket and knapsack tell you, do they not?” asked Rob ; “and here,” he added, touching it, slung by his side, “is my powder-horn ; the same one I was making, last year, on Independence day, when I met you on the road as you were coming home.”

The tears sprang into Polly’s eyes. “Yes, they tell me,” she answered, solemnly ; “and whether to be very glad, or very sorry, I cannot say.”

“Be very glad,” said the boy. “I am a man, for the first time, to-day ; and a free man. I have been a slave ever since I was

a little child, and if I never come back it's all one; I have nothing to come to."

"O, yes, you have!" returned Polly; "we all, Peter, and Miss Keziah, and Judith, too, in her still way, and I,—O, I should be so sorry if any evil befell you! And we shall be so happy to give you a welcome when we see you again!"

"If you ever do," answered the boy, with a sigh. "You wonder where I earned these," he continued, touching his musket, and then laying his hand on the cuff of his coat, as if conscious of pleasure in being, for once, suitably attired; "but, ever since I first heard of the fighting at Lexington, it has been in my thoughts day and night. 'There,' I would say to myself, every time I heard of the soldiers going out, 'is a chance for me.' All the time it has kept growing worse in the shop, till I can't bear it any longer. Perhaps I am foolish, but, as I might be suspected, I thought I would rather go equipped with all the mili-

tia law required. So every farthing I could earn I saved. I laid snares for the crows and got bounties on their heads ; and when I went over to the tanner's, as I often had to, I always carried a long pole, with an iron fork in one end of it, and took my way over the Ledge, and looked for rattlesnakes as I went, and if I killed one I had a bounty for that ; and last winter I made powder-horns, and sat up at night in the cold to do it ; and I've had odd jobs of cobbling, — nothing but what I had a right to," he said, fearing he might be thought to have used his master's time dishonorably, "but things that came in my own way, that did not concern the shop ; and at last I earned my clothes and my musket ; — they will give me a new one, I hope, when I get where I am going, but I bought this cheap ; it is one that was used in the French war fifteen years ago ; — and my knapsack Jotham Brown gave me ; he is a man you never saw, a teamster that used to live

here, and was kind to my father, and has been to me. If any one ought to fight for liberty, it is I. I know what it is to long for it, enough."

"I hope," said Polly, piously, "that God will keep you; and I am sure he will," she added, "for we shall never forget to ask him."

"But I am not quite free yet," said Rob, "and I shall not feel so till there are a good many miles between this place and me. I must be gone now, for soon they will be out searching for me, as they were for Brown Beck and your uncle's teaspoons; and if Master Dow offers a large reward, there will be those ready enough to take me back. But they never shall,—they never shall!" he repeated. "Good by, and give my love to all at the house, and this to your brother," he said, and took from his breeches-pocket a little hard package, like a book; "it's all I have in the world that is of value to any one, and I thought, perhaps, as he is a scholar, it would be of use to him."

As she took it, the great tears ran down Polly's cheeks, for she could not bear to think of her first childish friend going out alone into the world, soon, perhaps, to meet death, and that in all probability they would never meet again. Rob brushed his hand across his eyes. "Polly," he said, "be careful of one thing; keep the book hid, and tell no one you have seen me till at least two weeks have gone by, not even Miss Keziah or your brother. They are both true friends, but if they really do not know anything about me, it will be easier for them to answer questions if they are asked them. Good by," he said, with a quiver of the lip.

"Good by!" sobbed Polly, wishing she had some little memento that Rob could carry away. She took her kerchief to wipe her eyes; it was a common one, coarse and ill woven, for it was one of Polly's first achievements at the wheel and the loom, but she had nothing else to give. "It's all I have with me," she

said, "and it's very clumsily wove, but perhaps it will make you think of us, and when you see it you must always feel that you have some friends who think of you wherever you are."

"Thank you a thousand times," answered the boy, "for the kind gift and the kinder thought! But I must be going," he said, looking all around, like one who feels himself in danger; "I cannot stay! Good by, again!" He took her hand, just touched it to his lips, and was off, bounding like a deer up a steep path along a rocky ledge, and finally vanishing in a thicket of young sumachs.

Polly went home with her little basket half filled with berries, and the wilted wild rose in her hair, sad and anxious, but a little proud withal, for she had come at last, she thought, to a romantic chapter in what seemed, to her adventurous spirit, like a mournfully prosaic life.

Not a word did she utter when Peter, who,

in his way, had learned to entertain a pleasant, friendly feeling for Rob, whose ardent, restless temperament was so different from his own more quiet and studious one, came in quite alarmed with the statement that Jacob Dow, the shoemaker, had offered a large reward for the capture of his runaway apprentice, and that he, and one or two rough men like himself, and the sheriff, were out in hot pursuit of poor Rob.

“He’s run away and ’listed,” said Miss Keziah.

“How did you know he had?” asked Polly, almost sharply, and nearly betraying her knowledge.

“Know?” returned Miss Keziah; “it’s what any sensible fellow ought to do in his place, and so I guess he has; I’ve wondered why he did n’t, this long while.”

“But I am so afraid he will be caught!” sighed Polly; and felt, as she did so, of the book which she had put for the time in the patch-

work pocket under her short-gown and apron. It was a Hebrew Psalter, with "John Millin" on the title-page; the only thing that had remained to the orphan child of a father who, in his youth, had known wealth and luxury and all bright anticipations of future pleasure and honor.





CHAPTER X.

BURGOYNE'S defeat! How it made the pulses beat and served to keep up the waning courage of the Colonies! But for that, what would have become of hope?

Polly's father wrote a glowing letter, which was a long, long while in reaching them, giving a heart-cheering account of it; and Parson Piper preached and prayed and returned thanks, interweaving the good news with all the exercises of public worship for four Sundays in succession, to the exclusion of almost every other topic; though, after all, his enthusiasm was hardly as great as it had been when Stark carried all before him at Bennington, for Stark was a New Hampshire man, and

sectional pride was a stronger feeling then than it is to-day, when we are all bound together "with sinews of brass and iron."

But when the huzzas of victory had died away, and snow had come again, what a depressing, gloomy, fearful winter it was! Not alone to the barefooted soldiers sitting all night, hungry and homesick, by their campfires, because they had no blankets in which to sleep, but to every little village throughout the land, how much of privation and hardship it brought! Poor Parson Piper's salary, paid in paper currency, was insufficient to buy decent clothing for his family (Mrs. Piper being one of the few women who were not accustomed to doing their own spinning and weaving); and the little Pipers found themselves brought to hard commons and short fare, — an unexpected lot, for, as minister's children, they had been accustomed to carry themselves not without arrogance among their little mates when the eye of the good preacher was not upon them.

Polly, when she went to spend a brief time with her Aunt Nancy, found that things in the fine house were greatly changed. Her uncle, during the two past seasons, seemed to have grown almost ten years older. So many of his debtors had come to make payment, that the amount of paper-money he had on hand was to him a matter of most serious concern; and as it every day was losing in value, his face grew longer and his brow more furrowed all the while. Aunt Nancy entertained Polly with distressing statistics of the price of various articles of food and wear; telling her of an extravagant bride who was to be married in a dress the satin of which was seventy dollars a yard; and of a soldier whose three months' wages had barely purchased a warming-pan; and how the price of ten acres of land which they had sold had brought to them but little more than half a peck of salt. Truly, Mr. Burbean's prophecy had come to pass; "breadstuffs were scarce

and taxes high; the Indians on the borders were all hawking round, and the paper-money was worth little more than a crop of fireweed"; which, by the way, was a troublesome, exhaustive plant, springing up on newly burnt lands.

Dr. Austin, when he had seen her at the time of his furlough, had left with Miss Keziah a sufficient sum of money to meet all the expenses of his children for a long season in advance, but he had hoped, ere this, to be able to forward an additional remittance. It was, however, almost impossible to send to her securely, at so great a distance; and besides, all he could now procure was in paper currency, which seemed of too little value to be worth transmitting. So Peter and Polly began to have a sadly dependent feeling, and to relieve it as best they could, bravely set to work to make themselves paying members of the family in which they were placed. Parson Piper, out of pure love of bestowing instruc-

tion, had insisted that Peter should continue to come to him each week, and with the hope that the lad would prove, in the end, a preacher like himself, had constrained him to pursue his study of Hebrew, in which Rob's Psalter was found to be a valuable assistance ; but if at any time the pupil was unusually dull, it would commonly turn out that Peter had been in the woods helping Job Hart get in the stock of "fewel" (a matter of interest to the minister, the best part of his salary being then made up of his annual supply of thirty cords of fire-wood), or that he had been driving Miss Keziah's oxen in breaking out the road, or preparing stakes (all cut by hand) for a new fence, or, in warm weather, that he had been busy swingling flax in the barn.

They all in that vicinity wore old shoes that winter, for the shoemaker, with no Rob to help him, was habitually delinquent in meeting his engagements. Polly often recalled her old friend's romantic farewell on the hillside,

and wonderingly queried, with Peter and Miss Keziah, what had become of him ; but no word in regard to his fortunes had ever reached them.

“No news is good news,” said Miss Keziah, “but I only wish I’d known the boy was going ; I would have knit him a store of stockings and made him a pair of shirts.”

“It is well to bear the yoke in one’s youth.” Peter hard at work, and then busy at his books, Polly learning to cook and sew and spin and weave, were each acquiring, every day, lessons of patience, industry, and thoughtfulness toward others.

Even for Mrs. Job Hart, indifferent whether the “Gineral Congress” or “King George” was in power, and whose baby still wore a grimy cap, Polly began to feel a forbearing tenderness. What must it have been to spend one’s childhood with a family of nine in a log-hut with but one small window and a smoky chimney, with a drunken Indian family on

one side, and a wolf-haunted wood on the other, with a rough father who had fallen into roaming ways in the French war, and who left, in savage fashion, the chief care of the planting and harvesting to his unfortunate "women folks"; with no furniture but a few stools, no dishes or cooking-utensils, save some poorly made wooden plates, a kettle, and a hand-basin, with which the water for all the family use must be brought from the river; with no bed but one of hemlock-boughs or straw,—what must such a life have been? Polly, in the new light of her experience of hard work, was all alive with sympathy, and instead of scorning Mrs. Hart for her ignorance and her untidy ways, looked at her with wonder that she had preserved a clean heart through all; and when, one bleak March morning, she found that the last baby had been supplanted by a new one, she took Miss Keziah's old white horse, and urged her through the mud and melting snow of the worst of roads to Mr. Burbean's, to

borrow a blanket, that the little stranger might be properly presented for baptism the next Sunday ; “delays are dangerous” being, one would think, the motto of old-time New England church-members as regarded christenings. It was a pretty square of white linen, quilted with many flowers, that had done good service for the fourteen Burbean infants, to say nothing of much lending, and was good still for long years of future use.

Polly was quite indignant that Miss Keziah, who had the chief rule of everything on her place, did not think best that the little stranger should be carried nearly four miles on its first earthly Sabbath to be baptized ; and was, in turn, delighted when, three weeks after, on a sunny April Sunday, the baby could be wrapped in its borrowed mantle and wear the new embroidered cap which she had made, and go, carried in Miss Keziah’s arms, in the cart, to the house of the Lord, where he received a name of Polly’s own selection,

“Peter Lafayette,” — a double name, which was a rare thing in those days ; but no single one could have satisfied Polly, who, half jealously, thought that Parson Piper, in his patriotic prayer, offered more fervent petitions for the French general than for his insignificant namesake.

But it was less, after all, of births than of death that the gentle spring was speaking to them. A change had come over the quiet home that the brother and sister had learned to call theirs. The old grandmother, who had seemed so very aged and frail that they had thought she might die at any time, still kept her place at the table and the hearth, and told over the tales of the borrowed frying-pan, and the besieged garrison, and the half-starved soldier, as often as ever ; but Judith, the pale, still woman, whose hand had always been busy from morning till night, was now too feeble for toil, and patiently and serenely she was “wearing away, like a snow-wreath in a thaw.”

In vain the village doctor, his great saddle-bags stuffed, came to her with his prescriptions ; in vain Miss Keziah steeped for her golden-rod, balm, life-everlasting, and queen-of-the-meadow : every passing week found her more wasted and languid. Her chief delight was in the hymns of the new book, " Watts's Collection," which now took the place of " Tate and Brady " in the Sunday meetings. Polly had learned many of these by heart, and used to say them over to her, as they sat together in the sweet summer twilight till it deepened into dusk. There was one that she seemed to prefer to all the others :—

“ A blooming paradise of joy
In this wild desert springs :
And every sense I straight employ
On sweet celestial things.

“ White lilies all around appear,
And each his glory shows !
The rose of Sharon blossoms here,
The fairest flower which blows.”

Perhaps it was the thought of the celestial blossoms that lent the hymn its charm, for the flower-bed under the window had been to poor Judith, for the last few years, her greatest pleasure ; and now that she knew her time was brief, and other earthly things had lost for her their interest, she still watched the unfolding of the buds with all her old delight, and even expressed the wish that she might live to see in bloom a rare and beautiful rose-bush, called the cinnamon-rose, the root of which a friend of Keziah's had sent all the way from "old Haverhill" two years before. It had grown well, but never flowered until this spring, when it was covered with buds. A few warm days, the first of June, seemed to develop them all at once, and the bush, among the green grass where it grew, gleamed like a fragrant cloud dropped from the morning sky. They drew Judith in the cushioned arm-chair up to the window, that she might see it.

“ ‘ White lilies all around appear,
And each his glory shows !
The rose of Sharon blossoms here,
The fairest flower which blows.

“ ‘ Up to the fields, above the skies,
My hasty feet would go, —
There everlasting flowers arise,
And joys unwith’ring grow,’ ”

she whispered, smiling, and then, being weary, closed her eyes, and dropped at last to sleep. When she wakened her mind wandered, and, as it proved, these were the last reasonable words she spoke.

How worn and wasted she looked, when the gentle soul had flown, and the clay was only clay ! Pinned inside her short-gown was a fragment of paper enclosing a lock of hair, and some time-faded verses, well written, — those who could write commonly wrote well in those days, — but not perfect in spelling or measure, and signed “ Ebenezer.” Of what sweet sad secret of her girlhood they were the

last reminder no one knew, not even Miss Keziah ; but Polly regarded them reverently, and felt that she knew the reason of the expression of patient submission which had always rested on Judith's placid face.

"There is one thing," said Miss Keziah, as she laid on the closed eyes two silver coins still remaining in the house, "I will not dishonor Judith by making her funeral a display of extravagance, as some such occasions in this region have been."

"No, I would n't," said Mrs. Piper, the parson's wife, who, hearing of the mournful event, had ridden over ; "but then, I like suitable respect paid to the departed. Now, in some places, since the war, it seems as if they were giving up everything. The women are wearing no mourning, except black ribbon on their bonnets, and the men only a piece of crape on the arm ; and they don't even give gloves to the bearers ; that seems dreadful to me."

"Well," said Miss Keziah, "there are things

that I think are worse. Now, when Jabez Plummer, Mrs. Burbean's sister's husband, died, it really seemed sinful the way his widow went on. Jabez had been doing well and had laid up money, but, when he died, one would have thought a woman with nothing of her own, and five children under eight, two of them twin babies, would have felt she did not want to go to needless expense; and yet, all she appeared to care about was a handsome burial. She got a black scarf, gown, and bonnet for herself, and dressed the children in mourning, and bought black buttons and buckles for her husband's brother who lived with her, and funeral rings to give to all the relations, and as many as twenty pairs of gloves, — some costly ones, to lay on the coffin for the bearers to put on when they took up the bier; and she got some Jamaica rum, and Madeira wine, and other spirits, for the supper, when the procession should come home; and the young brother took so much it turned his head, and

he began to sing "Push about the Jorum" at the table; and Mrs. Plummer found herself in debt, and has been in trouble ever since. I am no one's judge, but such conduct would be very wrong in me."

"Well, I don't like display," said Mrs. Piper, who had a still unsubdued fondness for finery, "but I *do* like gloves at a funeral."

"But gloves are just what, in a time like this, cannot be thought of!" said Keziah, with an anxious remembrance of the dependent old mother and her wants, and of the half-filled salt-cellar on the closet shelf, and of the price of shoes and of grain, and a patriotic thought, not the less, of the brave men in arms, who, through the dreary winter, had been garmentless and hungry, and of their suffering families, whom the soldiers' wages, tardily paid and almost worthless when received, could not support and could scarcely assist. "Judith will never be forgotten; but, when God in his providence has taken her where 'want' is a

word unknown, and there are those living about us who are sorely in need of food and clothing, I shall go into no expense for her funeral beyond what seems to me necessary to make it suitable and respectful, *under the circumstances.*" Miss Keziah felt that, in saying this, she had taken an independent stand. The stuff that reformers are made of was mingled in her character.

The sun shone brightly on the day of the burial ; the birds sang their sweetest, and the soft south-wind came through the window into the front room where the mourners were sitting, and where a coffin of pine boards painted black rested on the table spread with white, in the middle of the room. How lifelike and sweet the face within it looked, made lovely with that almost glorified smile that not infrequently comes to the lips of one who has fallen into the last dreamless sleep !

There were no gloves on the coffin. The old mother sat propped up in her great arm-

chair, wearing a still well-preserved black bonnet, that she had had for twenty years ; but Miss Keziah, though she had long been to Judith as a sister, wore not even the semblance of mourning. "Borrowing black" was a mockery that she despised, and so costly was every article of imported ware, she had not even ventured to allow herself a new ribbon ; an omission which was a trial to Polly, who, even on solemn occasions, had a reverence for the fashion of the time, and still, against her will, her sympathies were with Miss Keziah. Every needless expenditure, in those dark days, seemed like a wicked waste.

Unconsciously she herself had made an innovation upon the customs of the day. Where the winding-sheet crossed Judith's breast, Miss Keziah had slipped beneath it the time-yellowed verses and the lock of hair ; and Polly laid, just over them, a knot of the sweet-smelling pinks that Judith had loved to gather from the little flower-bed, and on the coffin-lid,

instead of the great bunch of tansy commonly placed there, was a lovely branch of the new rose-tree, its blossoms grown of a paler pink, but not a petal shed.

Parson Piper preached from the quaint text, "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff"; which seemed to him appropriate, since Judith was well known, not only in her own household, but in all the community, as a famous spinner and weaver, and, before her health had failed, was often in request, among the families who knew her, to come with her little wheel and assist them.

Such dainty linen as she wove! so firm, and fine, and white! The winding-sheet that wrapped her round she had made herself. She had watched the flax when its blue blossoms gleamed in the sun; she had wound its delicate fibre on the distaff, and spun and woven every thread herself; she had spread the web to bleach in the glad spring sunshine, in the fields where the dewy grass glistened as with

gems, and where golden lines showed the wanderings of the cowslip-bordered brook ; and, when the sheet was finished, she had laid it away in the great store-chest, with lavender between its folds. Now, like a tired child, in-folded in it, she had lain down to sleep.

Of the industry, patience, and the purity of her life, the good preacher spoke with tender appreciation, and dwelt with sorrow on her departure ; but, true to himself, it was not long before all thought of private grief was lost in that of the public peril. The poor parson was beginning to be less hopeful of speedy success ; the war was so slow in coming to an end ! But, however cast down, his faith in the ultimate triumph of liberty was never for a moment shaken. Instead of the funeral psalm which he had intended to line out for the singers, beginning,

“ Remember, Lord, our mortal state,
How frail our life, how short the date ! ”

absorbed by his interest in his country, and

too absent-minded to remember his surroundings, he had commenced a hymn headed in the book as a "Complaint against Persecutors":—

"And will the God of grace
Perpet'al silence keep?
The God of justice hold his peace,
And let his veng'ance sleep?

"Behold, what cursed snares
The men of mischief spread!"

Just then, it came back to him where he was, and he grew very red; but thinking the best way out of his difficulties was to go forward, he proceeded to line out two more of the six stanzas following, which were sung with spirit by the singers, although there was some interchange of glances among them, and Tabby Burbean, who had just been weeping aloud, smiled visibly at the blunder.

"The noble and the base
Into thy pastures leap:
The lion and the stupid ass
Conspire to vex thy sheep.

“Convince their madness, Lord,
And make them seek thy name ;
Or else their stubborn rage confound,
That they may die with shame,”

were verses, certainly, that did not breathe the spirit of pious resignation and submission which one would look for in a funeral hymn.

“It was very dreadful!” Polly thought ; and poor Mrs. Piper, who was always in dread of her husband’s absent-minded mistakes, looked exceedingly disturbed.

When the exercises were closed, the mourners went forward “to take leave of the corpse.” The poor mother, bowed with age and broken in mind, bent half-wonderingly over the coffin, as though she thought her daughter might in truth be “not dead but sleeping,” while Polly’s tears fell fast on the gentle face that she had never seen clouded by a frown. There were twelve bearers, six of whom were to carry the bier, and the others to exchange places with them on the way to the burial-ground, for it was

over three miles they had to go ; but the number was more than was needed, the burden was so light. Polly, worn as she was with previous care of the sick, felt almost faint as she wended her way with the slow-moving procession, along the dusty road. It seemed as if her weary feet would never suffice to carry her all the way and home again, and when she had passed the gate to return, she leaned on Peter, who walked with her, glad of the support of his arm. It was the same graveyard that she had once looked upon with terror, and that, moved by Brown Beck's stories, she had peopled with ghosts and hobgoblins ; but now, with Judith slumbering under its green turf, it seemed a sacred and a cherished place.

All the bearers, Parson Piper and his wife, and several friends and acquaintances, for relatives there were none, returned to Miss Hapgood's to partake of the funeral supper, a substantial meal of bread and meat, pies and cakes ; but, considering the costliness of spirits

and wines, Miss Keziah had resolutely determined to dispense with them. Mr. Burbean, one of the bearers, reminded, perhaps by their absence, of the gloomy outlook, set down his mug of cider with a long-drawn sigh. "These are hard times, I declare!" he said; "I don't see how things can be much darker than they are to-day!" He looked, Polly noticed, worn and poverty-pinched, and his hair was showing the snow of age, as well as that of powder. "Liberty, so far, seems to mean prodigious hard work and monstrous poor pay!"

"Poor pay!" broke out Parson Piper, whom the remark had not been intended to reach, — "poor pay! It's worth all the blood that has been spilt, to feel that we are a recognized nation with a flag of our own; a flag that hain't waved a year yet, but that I hope will be flying when our children's children are laid in dust! We ain't working for ourselves. A man like you, Mr. Burbean, with thirteen children, has got the future to think about."

"That is so," said Mr. Burbean, with a fatherly smile lighting up his countenance, "and I ain't inclined generally to be down-hearted, nor to take a gloomy view o' things ; but somehow of late it does look dark to me, very dark."

"Polly," said Peter, when the supper was over, and Tabby Burbean and Mrs. Hart were wiping up the dishes, — "Polly, come out with me, and let us go down by the spring."

"Yes," said Polly, though she was so wearied by her walk to the graveyard that she would have answered "No," only it was so rare a thing for Peter to ask her to go out with him. "Was something going to happen?" she thought ; for a misgiving was in her heart, as she closed the door behind her, and looked up anxiously in her brother's face. "What is it, Peter?" she asked.

But Peter said nothing ; only he led the way across the road, where a spring bubbled up among the rocks, under the shade of a

great willow. "Polly," he said, sitting down on a rough seat made from a tree-trunk, which he had fitted there himself, so as to have a quiet place for study, and drawing her gently down beside him,—“Polly, don't you think, with Mr. Burbean, that these are hard times?”

“Yes, Peter, I do,” answered Polly, half smiling, half crying; “things look dark.”

“In the first place,” said Peter, “I'm getting to be a man; I'm sixteen, and tall.”

“Yes,” returned Polly, “and I am grown older too. I don't feel as if I could be the same little girl that was at Aunt Nancy's and was afraid of witches.”

“And a man needs something to live on,” said Peter; “here we are,—the paper-money, if father could send it to us, is, as people say, grown good for nothing. It is n't without a cause for it that Uncle Philbrick's hair has turned so white. I am of some use here on the farm; but Cousin, Keziah, although she would not say so for anything, does not really

need me, and as for going to college, it is an impossibility. I might earn something by teaching school, but half the grammar schools are given up, and if they were not—I don't know—” He stopped and leaned his head upon his hand.

“Don't worry,” said Polly; “things will come out some way; they always do.”

“Some way? Yes,” repeated Peter, “but what way? Don't you think, Polly, it's a long time since we have heard from father?” he asked.

“Do I think of anything else?” returned Polly. “What is it that is in my mind wherever I go but— He is n't dead, Peter? you must n't speak of that!”

“No,” said Peter, “it is not strange that we have not heard, everything is so uncertain, now; but there is no use in thinking we can get word to him, and ask for advice. I don't know where he is, and it takes such a monstrous while for a letter to come to us, even if

he does write ! I have got to act for myself. Parson Piper is the nearest a father to me of any one here, and General Sullivan is all the time calling for volunteers to go to Rhode Island, and — and — I 'm going, Polly."

"Going !" screamed Polly, starting up, — "going ? If you do, I shall be all alone in the world ! all, all alone ! Parson Piper don't care for anything but the country ; if he thought it would further the cause of liberty half an inch, he would see you cut in pieces ; I believe he would ! He is cruel, and you are cruel, and I wish this dreadful war had never been begun !" And Polly, all her patriotism vanishing in an instant, threw her arms around her brother's neck and sobbed aloud, as if her heart would break.

"But I sha'n't be placed as some soldiers are," explained Peter, smoothing down her hair with gentle, caressing touch ; "Parson Piper knows General Sullivan, and he is going to write to him ; and besides, he is acquainted

with the colonel, who has been hereabouts getting recruits, and he promises, if I go, to take me into his own tent, and I shall be cared for in every way that one can be."

"Cared for!" said Polly, bitterly; "yes, cared for as the soldiers were at Valley Forge! And as for me, I shall be all alone in the world! all, all alone!"





CHAPTER XI.

IN the retrospect of the three weary years that followed, Polly's thoughts always centred upon one day.

It was a mild spring morning, the 19th of May. She was at home with her Cousin Keziah, and they were busily packing up and getting things in order ; for now that Judith's mother, for whom she had cared so long, was laid to rest, Miss Hapgood was thinking of indulging herself in a visit to Massachusetts, and in seeing "old Haverhill" once more. She would not sell her New Hampshire place, however ; times were too uncertain for her to think of disposing of it. Polly, during her absence, would stay with her Aunt Nancy, who

in the past year had grown very fond of having her niece with her; for Polly, the last few months, had been boarding with her aunt and teaching the village reading-and-writing school, instructing the children chiefly from the primer and psalter, and giving the girls lessons in sewing, knitting, tambour-work, and embroidery.

It was not a very lively place, for Mrs. Philbrick, though better satisfied with her niece than of old, was no more patient with the rest of the world, and was always indulging in dreary forebodings as to the future or equally cheerless reminiscences of the past; now telling over the story of Brown Beck's ingratitude, now dwelling on the "upstart injustice" of their poorer neighbors, and, again, complaining of the hard work of her daily lot, and prophesying even greater trials yet to come. Her husband, who still, in spite of his losses, was esteemed the richest man in the township, was so tormented by the comparison of past pros-

perity and present insecurity, as to feel as if he were in abject poverty ; and although, from pride, they still maintained something of style in their manner of life, there was constantly an atmosphere of gloom about the house that was truly oppressive.

It was therefore with sorrow that Polly thought of Miss Keziah's departure, as she stood, this May morning, looking out of her bedroom window. The wind came in from the west laden with the odor of lilac-flowers, from a tree whose root, like that of Judith's cinnamon-rose, had been brought from "old Haverhill," and which now tossed its great purple plumes over the front porch. It was dripping with moisture, for there had been a slight shower, and all the morning a threatening thunder-cloud had hung over the west, settling round toward the north, and the wind was blowing up clouds from the southwest.

"It is going to be a bad day to sew," said Polly ; "and after we had finished our other

work, I had hoped to get about my Grecian robe, and begin to embroider it." Her Grecian robe was a gown of white linen, wrought with a straggling vine in blue cotton thread, a common fashion of the time.

"See those clouds coming up," said Miss Keziah, looking over Polly's shoulder as she gazed out of the window; "they have a strange brassy look, not like rain-clouds, and not smoke."

"Yes," said Polly; "see that great one hovering over Squaw's Peak, where, week before last, the fire was raging."

"Yes," said Miss Keziah, "Justice Cram had Pompey set fire to a lot of birch-trees to clear the land, but it's a poor way to do it; I was glad when the rain came and put it out. But how dark it is!" she exclaimed, as she turned back to the room; "I can scarcely see; my eyes are failing, I declare!"

"Your eyes failing! No; but it's fearful dark," said Polly; "almost like the day Ju-

dith's mother used to tell about in 1716, when they had to light candles to eat dinner by."

"And I shall have to light a candle, too," said Miss Keziah, who held in her hand an unfinished piece of sewing-work. "If I go on my journey, this gown must be finished, and I can't possibly see without one." She went down stairs, and Polly still stood by the window looking out. How unreal the landscape appeared! The strange darkness was deepening all the while; a gloomy shadow that wore the look of coming night was creeping up the meadow. In the growing dusk she could scarcely see the alder-trees beyond the brook; they were mere indistinct shapes. Darker and darker it grew, till now she could barely distinguish them at all. She looked up and saw that weird copper-colored cloud had closed over all the sky.

"Polly!" called Miss Keziah, from below stairs, speaking to her,—"Polly! this is something dreadful!"

“Yes, dreadful!” answered Polly, under a fascination that still kept her at the window.

Darker and darker still it grew! She heard a fluttering; the purple doves were hurrying to their window in the top of the barn, and a flock of turkeys were flying up to the old oak, where they were accustomed to roost at night. She could not see the alders at all now, nor tell where the pine-trees stood; but down in the marsh the frogs were peeping, and look! old Crumple Horn had made her way out of the pasture, and, followed by the two cosset sheep, was wending her way through the shadows to the barn-yard, where she was wonted to be milked. Darker and darker yet! The night-birds began to call “whip-poor-will! whip-poor-will!” from the low roof of the long shed. She heard the melancholy sound, and, as she listened, a great gray owl, with glaring eyes, flew close to her, following its prey.

“Polly!” said Miss Keziah, coming to the

door with a candle in her hand, and with a solemn countenance, — “Polly ! this is dreadful ! I can’t help thinking of the text, ‘The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.’ ”

“Yes,” said Polly, “I have thought of it myself, and of the hour when ‘the veil of the temple was rent.’ ”

The two women sat down, hand in hand, on the side of Polly’s little bed. The clock struck the hour of noon, but the darkness only seemed deeper ; the customary midday meal was unthought of ; the cock crowed as he did in the early morning, and the candle, untended, burnt low, with crusted wick and flickering flame. All that was sad and mysterious in human life, all that was trying in her own experience, came back to Polly. What wrong and wretchedness there was in the world ! what suffering, and sin, and bloodshed ! She seemed to behold, as in a vision, the dreary

events of which the last years had been so full. The blood-stained snows of Valley Forge, the pestilential heat of Monmouth, the red flame of Wyoming,—she recalled them all. Ships lashed together, with soldiers grappling in a death-struggle on their decks, battle-fields strewn with corpses, loathsome prisons, rifled houses, every fearful or shameful thing of which she had heard or read, seemed to rise before her. All her saddest thoughts were linked with those of war, for the national struggle had taken from her what was dearest in her life.

A black wall seemed to shut her in, beyond which she could neither see nor hear. If she could only know where her father and Peter were! but it was now long months since she had heard from either of them. The last letter from her father had hinted of sickness; and, though he had breathed no word of complaint, she knew what he must suffer, in one of the army hospitals, which, from other sources, she

had learned to be destitute of almost every comfort he would need ; while, as for Peter, she had not heard from him since General Sullivan's resignation in November, and then his letter had been one of disappointment. When he left for the war he had hoped to be able, before this time, to write of brave deeds, if not of glorious victories ; but General Sullivan, under whose command he was enlisted, having engaged in his much-criticised expedition against the Six Nations, the poor lad felt that he had endured many hardships and encountered many dangers, for, at best, a very doubtful good in the result.

This brief and hastily written letter was all they had received from Peter, and all that Polly knew of the twin-brother who had shared her cradle, and joined with her in her childish sports, and who had had so full a part in all her thoughts and feelings, that her own existence had seemed a double one. Where, too, was Rob, her childish friend, with his ear-

nest eyes and daring heart? Never, since she bade him "good by," that sweet June morning, had word or sign returned to tell of his welfare. Would the veil ever be lifted, and she behold her lost friends on earth again, or was it, in truth, the shadow of death?

"Polly," said Miss Keziah, as if she divined her thoughts, "let us not be afraid; 'the darkness and the light are both alike to Him.'"

By and by, scarcely perceptibly at first, the sky began to lighten. "Does it, or not?" asked Polly, in doubt; but in the next half-hour the change was very evident, and by three o'clock the appearance was like that of an ordinary murky afternoon.

But at night the strange darkness returned. It seemed to Polly, lying awake, as if it were an actual presence in the room, such perfect blackness rested all around; "a thick darkness, that might be felt," like that which fell on ancient Egypt. The moon, that the night

before had shone into her window, seemed blotted out; there was not even the faintest glimmer of light. Polly started up from her pillow and gazed about. Her bed was curtainless, but a frightful pall seemed close drawn all around her. "A horror of great darkness" came upon her. She grew cold, and shuddered with unknown terror; and then she remembered Miss Keziah's words of Scripture comfort, "The darkness and the light are both alike to Him." They fell upon her troubled mind like balm. She said them over and over to herself, until at last she dropped asleep, and when she woke again a few hours after, the moon was looking down calmly and brightly, and the stars were gleaming in the clear sky.





CHAPTER XII.

WAS it Polly, or some one else? Polly had to pinch herself to find out.

She was no longer a little country-maid roaming through the meadows, or singing at her wheel, but a fine young lady with a stiff brocade and a stiffer hoop ; with a long necklace of gold beads hanging over the fine lace in the low bosom of her short-waisted gown. Her hair had been arranged, with indescribable elaboration, upon the top of her head, and great golden hoops were gleaming in her ears. Her shoes were of white satin, decorated with resplendent buckles, and covered with roses and lilies, wrought in red and yellow silk ; but when she looked at her feet Polly knew

she was only Polly, for money was not yet a plentiful thing with her, and the only pair of silk hose she had were, strange to say, the very ones she had worn, not quite seven years before, on her ride to New Hampshire, and, as her feet were small and slender, they were still large enough for her to wear. Her rich dress had been made from one that was her mother's; but the handsome fan, shining with golden spangles, and painted with a picture of nymphs and goddesses, had been sent her by her father, as a present; for brighter days had come, and the pretty trifle had been transmitted in anticipation of his return; and Polly was now in Massachusetts, in her father's house with Mrs. Ellis, who had kept it all the while, waiting to give him a welcome home again. For victory had come! Victory! how much that word meant, after so many years of unrewarded struggling with the foe! How brightly the fair flag, a new flag then, like a fresh-blown flower with the dew on it, waved

under the blue sky! How the hills shook with echoed shouts, and every liberty-loving heart bounded with rapture! Parson Piper, after Cornwallis's surrender, had changed every Sunday into an unappointed Thanksgiving day, and the village choir had made the little meeting-house ring with the most exultant hymns in the new hymn-book, which was an edition for the times, full of radical republicanism in lyric form ; as .

“ When God, our leader, shines in arms,
What mortal heart can bear
The thunder of his loud alarms,
The lightning of his spear ?

“ He forms our gen'als for the field,
With all their dreadful skill,
Gives them his awful sword to wield,
And makes their hearts of steel.

“ He arms our captains to the fight,
Though there his name's forgot ;
(He girded Cyrus with his might,
But Cyrus knew him not.)”

or,

“ Zion, rejoice, and Judah, sing,
The Lord assumes his throne :
New England, own the heav’nly King,
And make his glories known.

“ The great, the wicked, and the proud,
From their high seats are hurled ;
Jehovah rides upon a cloud,
And thunders through the world.”

or,

“ Our States, O Lord, with songs of praise
Shall in thy strength rejoice ;
And blest with thy salvation raise
To heaven their cheerful voice.

“ Thy sure defence through nations round
Has spread thy glor’ous name ;
And our successful actions crowned
Thy majesty with fame ” ;

which last verse was Parson Piper’s favorite, as giving the fullest expression to his feelings.

It was before the formal declaration of peace, but the war was everywhere felt to be substantially closed.

Dr. Austin was anxious to be back in his home, but he had been detained, and would not ask for his discharge so long as he could be of any service ; and Polly, who had come to meet him in the old home where they had parted, was growing sick with hope deferred. But this evening, as she stood in her stiff brocade, and fastened a rose on her bosom, and drew on her long gloves, she was full of anticipation, for before night she expected to see Peter.

Poor Peter ! who had left her four years before, and who had now a soldier's record, made up of hard, but not brilliant experiences, of fatiguing marches, and wearisome life in the cold winter huts, and of dull days spent in Saratoga, where his regiment was lately quartered ; although there, having time, he had obtained books, and reviewed his old studies, intending, though later in life than he had hoped, to enter college immediately on his return home. A considerable number of other

soldiers were coming back to New England at the same time ; some who had been his near comrades, others belonging to different New Hampshire and Massachusetts regiments. Among them were persons well known in the community ; and as the general feeling of patriotic joy was constantly showing itself in public receptions, it was arranged to have a social gathering at the village tavern, with music and speeches ; a great supper of roast geese and turkeys, and a dance, besides, to welcome them.

It was a regret to Polly that she was compelled to meet Peter for the first time in the company of others. But enough of her old love of gayety and excitement remained to make her take great delight in rendering her toilet as becoming as possible.

“ Peter shall not be ashamed of me,” she resolved, as she arranged a little love-lock on her temple ; “ nor think I seem like a mere country wool-picker,” she thought, as she fas-

tened her handsome lace tucker ; “ nor fancy that Mrs. Job Hart taught me to courtesy,” she said, and practised bending and bowing before the glass, well pleased that she did not make an unattractive picture in it.

Polly’s cheeks were all aglow when she reached the gathering-place with Dr. Merrick, a queer old-bachelor friend of her father’s, who had been kind enough, for once, to give up his unsocial ways and offer her his escort.

Every eye in the room was turned toward the door, waiting for the soldiers, who were to enter in a body.

At last the orchestra, which consisted of three men with fiddles and three with flutes, struck up a merry tune, and two and two the heroes of the day came marching in. Freshly shaven, nicely powdered, in handsome uniforms, and with erect, soldierly bearing, they seemed to Polly, grown accustomed to the rough farmers that she had been wont to see, almost like beings from another sphere.

What! was that handsome young captain with the clear blue eye really Peter? He seemed too exalted a personage to be her brother! She longed to fly to him, and yet she felt afraid. He looked all around the room, and then his gaze fixed on her. "What!" thought he, "is that fair young lady with such fine carriage and splendid dress really my own little Polly, whom I left so slight and young and shy! It must be she, and yet how can it be?" And then he met her eyes, just as they used to look, clear and soft and tender, and with the quick impatient tears gathering in them, and he hurried across the room. "Polly!" he said, and bent down and kissed her, and it was the proudest moment in all her life; and then he led her into a quiet corner decked all around with evergreen wreaths until it was a bower; and they sat down together; and they both had so much to say that neither of them knew where to begin. "O, I am so glad to see you, Peter!"

Polly kept repeating. "And I am so glad to be back, Polly!" was Peter's as frequent reply; and Polly kept asking questions, and interrupting their replies by putting others, or by breaking in to say something that she felt she could not keep to herself a moment longer; and Peter looked down on his little twin sister, and said, "Well, Polly, you are twice as pretty and as fine as I ever expected to see you!" which made Polly's cheeks burn redder, and her eyes grow brighter, than ever before. It was no time for Peter to repeat the long story of his army life, with the music sounding and the hum of talk all around them; but their thoughts naturally went back to the friends they had left in New Hampshire. "Cousin Keziah is well and as active as ever," said Polly; "and Parson Piper is sorely cast down by the death of his wife; and Uncle Abel and Aunt Nancy have grown so old, worrying about their money, that they never will be able to enjoy their property; though, with the

paper currency he has bought great tracts of land, which now, it is thought, will increase in value till he will be richer than ever ; and Price Hodgkins has taken Uncle Abel's store, and — ”

“ And Brown Beck ! ” broke in Peter. “ Is n't it strange ? — I was talking one day with a man from New Hampshire who was in my company, and I found he had once been a clerk in Uncle Abel's store, and had boarded in the family, and of course seen Beck there, and he said that once he was in the camp of a regiment, near by, and that she came round to tell fortunes ; she was very poor, and haggard-looking, and she had two dirty children clinging to her, and a drunken fellow, that seemed to be her husband, was hanging about, to whom she gave the money that she earned ; and she looked as though she was paying dear for all her misdeeds ; though as for running away on Independence day, if she stole her freedom, then she only took her own.”

“And — O Peter!” said Polly, “there is one thing I want to ask ; have you ever heard a word from Rob, — poor, brave Rob ?”

“It is not very probable that I should,” said Peter, smiling, and just then he started up. “Polly,” he said, “I must leave you for a little while. Captain Stevens’s sister I see here. I met her in Boston with her brother when I stopped at his house on my way here, and I must go and pay her my compliments.”

“O yes, go!” said Polly, with a twinge of jealousy, and a searching glance at the fine city-girl in question, a tall sylph in spotless white, with a deep border of finest lace around the bottom of her dress.

“I will introduce you to her presently, but first, I want to make you acquainted with a young major who came with us. He is one who is worthy of the name of soldier. He entered the army when he was but a boy, just before the battle of Bennington, but he was as brave as an old hero ; unused to everything as

he was, he fought desperately, and was the first to force through the breastwork, that enabled them to take the brass cannon. He was, for his bravery, advanced at once, and since then glory has seemed to follow him. He fought with honor at Stillwater, carried off laurels from scorching Monmouth, and when Cornwallis surrendered he was there."

"Who is he? What is his name?" asked Polly. But Peter did not answer; he only walked away; and soon Polly saw him returning, with the fair Miss Stevens on his arm, and by his side a young officer, straight and slender, and with such piercing dark eyes as Polly had seen in only one before.

She gave him a long look, and then held out both her hands. "Peter cannot deceive me," she said; "you can only be yourself, and I'm *so* glad to see you, Rob." And then she checked herself, and blushed, remembering that her childish favoritism for poor Rob would be unmaidenly forwardness if shown

toward the gallant young officer who was the toast of the day.

But Rob grasped her hands eagerly in his, and said, "Indeed, Miss Polly, it is worth all I have been through to hear you say that." And then he sat down beside her in the ever-green bower, and what went on around them they neither heard nor saw; for Rob had so many questions to ask about Miss Keziah and Judith and Parson Piper and even Master Dow, who had died just after Cornwallis's surrender, which he celebrated by drinking himself to death, — though how he was able to get spirit enough to do so was a marvel, when liquors were at such a price, — and about Mr. Burbean, who still thought "things looked dark," and that, "even if we were a conquering nation, we should find that our troubles were not all ended"; and Polly's ready tongue ran its fastest. And then she was surprised to find she could be a good listener, for she quite held her breath while Rob told how, on the morning that

she had bidden him "farewell," he had taken his course through the woods and over the fields, pushing his way circuitously till he had reached Charlestown on the Connecticut River, an old frontier fort, and now the soldiers' rendezvous.

Then he went on to tell of perils in battle and daring encounters ; but all his tales, Polly noticed, were of the bravery of others and never of his own ; and, last of all, he took out, carefully wrapped in paper, the very handkerchief she had given him as a parting keepsake, and which, he told her, he had carried with him ever since ; and Polly blushed and smiled, and thought it was very charming and romantic, like a beautiful chapter in a novel, and this time she was the heroine herself ; and poor Dr. Merrick, who, out of friendship for her father, had taken such pains to escort her to the gathering, felt himself decidedly unneeded, and was obliged to seek consolation in the welcoming smiles of a stout widow who had long and

vainly tried to make his acquaintance ; and Polly forgot to be jealous, though Peter, in entertaining the fair Miss Stevens, seemed to have quite lost the thought that it was the first evening of his return, and that it was long years since he and his twin sister had been together before.





CHAPTER XIII.

IT was the lovely summer-time when Polly was married, three years after Peter's return.

The flax-fields, all in bloom, were blue as the sky, and the sky was without a cloud. The birds were all singing together ; and the wind, that came in through the open window, was heavy-laden with the odor of flowers ; while in the fireplace, where in winter the red blaze leaped and crackled as if in derision of the wild wind roaring without, now, in the white hearth-vase, glowed the sweet summer flame of full-blown roses, and clove-scented pinks, and fluttering sweet-peas, Judith's flowers, from the little bed under the window ; for Polly had

determined that her wedding, as Cousin Keziah had wished, should take place in her old New Hampshire home, where Rob and she, in their simple childish way, first learned to know and to care for each other.

For Rob was the bridegroom, made splendid for the occasion by a bright blue coat, white waistcoat, buff breeches, and white silk stockings, with gold buckles at the knee; and Polly was a charming little bride, and, spite the solemnity of the occasion, could not help being conscious that her wedding-gown, every stitch of which she had made herself, was the daintiest little white cloud of a dress that ever woman wore, and that her white satin shoes, with their glittering paste ornaments, were pretty and small enough for her to put on if she had been Cinderella, and were to marry a prince.

But, if not a prince, Rob was now exceedingly "well to do" in the world, enough so even to satisfy Aunt Nancy; for, after his suc-

cess in the army, some of his rich relations, who had turned a cold shoulder on his father in the days of his poverty, had taken pains to seek him out, and as a curmudgeonly old uncle, making his will from the caprice of the moment, had left him all his property, and died soon after, Rob was able to seek Polly with no empty hand.

Dr. Austin was there, looking pale and thin, for the rough life and exposure he had endured in the army had told upon his health ; yet still he seemed stronger, Polly thought, than he had done in a long time. Peter and the fair Miss Stevens stood up with the happy couple. Peter was almost a learned man already ; the college honors he had always coveted were now in his grasp, and he was anticipating many hours of quiet study and happy opportunities of usefulness in a minister's life, when the pretty bridemaid would be his bride instead.

As for Parson Piper, he made the marriage-prayer a thanksgiving for national blessings,

and a tribute of praise for victory in arms ; for Dr. Austin and Rob and Peter were so closely linked in his mind with the cause of freedom, that it was first in his thoughts whenever he saw one of them. But he did remember to return thanks for the marriage relation as the holiest and sweetest on earth, and Miss Keziah blushed, for, when September should come, she knew the parsonage would be her home, and that the little Pipers would call her "mother."

After the prayer everybody kissed the bride ; and Polly's eyes filled with grateful tears in answer to the kind wishes breathed all around her, and her heart throbbed with thankfulness for the past, while she looked forward with cheerful trust to what was then the fair uncertain future, and what is now the dim, long-buried past ;

" For this, all this, was in the olden
Time, long ago."



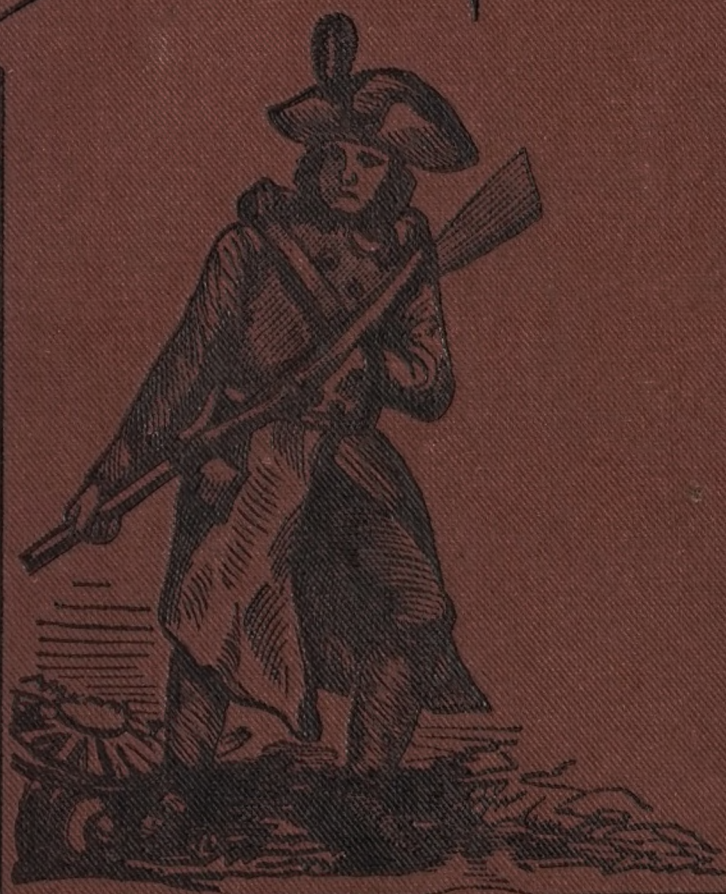
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